

AN EXPLORATION OF ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF INTENSIVE FAMILY INTERVENTIONS

Trilby Langton

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ABSTRACT

In seeking to make sense of adolescents' experiences of Intensive Family Interventions, this study has focused on one service in an inner London Borough chosen to be representative of this broader group of interventions. The term Intensive Family Interventions describes a collection of models that have been developed to attend to the needs of families in which there is an adolescent engaging in anti-social, criminal or risk behaviours, and where there is concern that the adolescent may enter the care system. Significant changes in legislation over the last two decades have influenced the emphasis on the governance of anti-social behaviour and a focus on the family. Within the literature there appears to be a paucity of research that seeks to understand how families, and particularly how adolescents, experienced this type of intervention.

This study draws on interview material from ten young people which was analysed using IPA. The analysis has focused on how they make sense of themselves and their contact with the service, how they experienced changes in their family functioning and has examined the types of relationships these young people have with professional systems. The themes have been structured around the concepts of *me*, *us*, *them* and *the outside world*. The results indicate that young people had both internalised and relational problem explanations. Young people described their painful and conflicted family relationships as well as the ways in which they managed to negotiate more hopeful and secure positions in the family. Beliefs about professionals are explored and interpretations are made about the influence of wider contextual factors in these young people's sense of their situations. The results are discussed in relation to the existing literature and theoretical ideas are used to make conceptual interpretations. The results of the study were presented to the professional team who had worked with the young people. The discussion which followed generated a number of clinical applications which are discussed and finally recommendations are made for further research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction Overview

The aim of this study is to understand how adolescents aged between 10 and 16 experience and make sense of 'Intensive Family Interventions'. The name 'Intensive Family Intervention' is used in this research to describe a collection of services that target adolescents and families who are characterised in particular ways. It is difficult to define precisely who these families and young people are because *who* they are changes over time and is constructed within different social and political contexts. In the last decade, political terminology has generated terms such as 'problematic' (Parr, 2009), 'chaotic' (Gregg, 2010) and 'troubled' (Casey, 2012) as ways of describing the families requiring intensive support. These families have also been described as 'socially excluded', 'multiply disadvantaged', 'hard to reach' and, most recently, 'beleaguered' (London Metropolitan University, 2013). Multiple disadvantages include poor housing, homelessness, unemployment, generational poverty, illness, disability and mental health problems (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007).

The adolescent whose behaviour has brought the family in contact with services is often the target of the intervention. Political terminology tends to focus on anti-social behaviour (hereafter ASB) and its effects in communities (Parr, 2011). Within the realms of social care and health these adolescents are often described as having emotional and behavioural difficulties and, increasingly, this profile of behaviours in adolescents has been categorised as 'conduct disorder', since the emergence of this diagnostic category in the 1980 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III (DSM III) (Harwood, 2006). It seems that multiple disadvantages in relation to these adolescents translates as socially excluded, not in education or training, at risk of entering the care system and high rates of offending (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007).

In an article in *The Daily Telegraph* at the time of the London 2011 riots, Johnson (2011) wrote 'the breakdown of the family [...] has left a generation of feral

adolescents'. This quote epitomises the dominant media representation of a group of families and adolescents and the problems they are seen to pose to society.

The introduction will begin by examining theoretical conceptualisations of adolescence as a distinct developmental period, making reference to how challenging adolescent behaviour has been viewed within these frameworks. The chapter will then review how key legislation has conceptualised and responded to problems within families and to challenging adolescent behaviour. Different treatment approaches will then be considered in relation to their theoretical underpinnings and their influence on the formation of today's various Intensive Family Intervention models.

What seems to be lacking is a more nuanced understanding of how the adolescents who receive these types of interventions make sense of their experiences. This chapter will therefore examine the existing literature on parents' and young people's experience of these interventions. This will outline what is known and what is not known about how these adolescents conceptualise 'the problem' and what it might be like to be viewed as 'troubled'. The introduction will end with a summary and outline of the research questions addressed in this study.

1.2 Theoretical Conceptualisations of Adolescence

It is important to begin by examining how 'troubled' adolescents have been conceptualised within psychological theory.

1.2.1 Historical Perspective

Adolescence as a construct emerged in social psychology in the early 20th century in a number of socioeconomic studies driven by desires for social reform (Ben-Amos & Krausman, 1994; Modell & Goodman, 1990). In fact much earlier historical texts show evidence of adolescents being viewed as a worrying

population. A number of Shakespeare's youthful characters were described as 'wronging the ancestry, stealing and fighting' (Esman, 1998), while William Fleetwood, a religious scholar of the 1600s, spoke of youth growing 'wanton, insolent and headstrong' (Ben-Amos & Krausman, 1994).

Stanley Hall (1904) was one of a number of psychologists who conceptualised adolescence in theory. Hall (1904) described this period of development as one of 'storm and stress', a term he borrowed from a German literary movement named 'Sturm und Drang'. The movement began in 1774 when Goethe wrote 'The Sorrows of Young Werther', a story depicting the emotional turmoil of a young German man (Goethe, 1982). Although Hall is often depicted as offering a concrete biological view of adolescence, Arnett (1999) argues that he did acknowledge some differences caused by contextual and relational factors, but that these ideas were overshadowed by Hall's focus on adolescent stress being universal.

1.2.2 Early Cross Cultural Perspectives

The 1920s saw cultural anthropologists such as Margaret Mead (1928) offering new perspectives on adolescence. Based on her observations in communities in Samoa, she argued against the universality of adolescent storm and stress. She observed that in many communities, adolescence was not characterised as either stressful or stormy, suggesting that ecological factors associated with development were significant in predicting a troubled adolescence. Although Mead's work received considerable criticism, it also drew attention to the influence of culture on young people's development and the notion that 'storm and stress' is predominately a western construct (Shankman, 2009).

1.2.3 Psychodynamic Perspective

Anna Freud, writing in 1958, suggested that a lack of any emotional turmoil in adolescence may be indicative of excessive defences against powerful drives (Arnett, 1999). In fact she goes so far as to say 'to be normal during the adolescent period is by itself abnormal' (Freud, 1958, p. 267). Ideas around what

is and is not normal are obviously subjective, however what is being conveyed is the sense that to experience turmoil is in some way characteristic of this developmental period.

Further developments in psychoanalytic thinking on the question of adolescence have included Erikson's (1968) psychosocial model and Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory. Erikson (1968) saw adolescence as the threshold into adulthood and intimately bound up with the move away from the family (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005). He argues that there are eight stages within the developmental lifespan, with the period between 12-18 years old characterised by what he called 'identity' versus 'role confusion'. Erikson (1968) argues that the task of adolescence is to find some resolution between these two poles, with the process involving the integration of early relationships and identifications into a new, more fully formed, identity (Kroger, 2003). The concept of a 'psychosocial moratorium' was introduced by Erikson (1968, p. 157), and refers to a space in which adolescents are allowed to separate from the family and try out different adult roles. Erikson (1968, p. 156) conceptualised this in the following passage;

"Any experimentation with identity images means also to play with the inner fire of emotions and drives and to risk the outer danger of ending up in a social 'pocket' from which there is no return. Then the moratorium has failed; the individual is defined too early, and he has committed himself because circumstances or, indeed, authorities have committed him".

The 'adolescent moratorium' seems to refer to adolescence as a time of moving away from one established position in order to return with a different one, and thus sees adolescence as a period not only of great vulnerability but also of possibility. However, this assumes that there are a broad range of identifications available to young people, which may not always be the case for marginalised young people in challenging contexts (Wiseman & Davidson, 2011).

1.2.3.1 Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1973) argued that in Western cultures children are dependent on their parents to provide for all their needs. Whether these needs are met in a secure base that is the family context is said to shape the child's developing sense of self and trust. Both Erikson (1968) and Bowlby (1973) saw this early development of trust as a central element in an adolescent's ability to negotiate the transition into adulthood. Infants who experience their needs met in a consistent way are said to develop a secure attachment to their parents and thus a secure sense of their own self-worth and ability, as well as a belief that the world is generally a safe place (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005). Conversely, infants who experience a sense of insecurity about their safety, or experience trauma or a lack of care are said to develop avoidant or ambivalent patterns of attachment. An avoidant attachment to one's parents may lead to feeling one cannot depend on others, while an ambivalent attachment style might be characterised by uncertainty about one's own capacity to love and be loved (Carr, 1999). These ideas are questioned on a number of counts, including Bowlby's emphasis on a very Western idealisation of parenting, and the focus he placed on the maternal relationship (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005). However, since attachment theory's first emergence, it has been considerably researched and refined, with a body of subsequent work suggesting that anti-social or offending behaviour is often associated with insecure early attachment relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999, Fearon, et al. 2010).

Indeed Winnicott (1956) also thought that there was a direct relationship between an 'anti-social tendency' and the experience of childhood loss and deprivation, thus highlighting the dynamic relationship between anti-social acts and the child's environment (Crouch, 2011). Winnicott (1956) said that these acts were signs of a child striving for boundaries and an indication that a child could mobilise action in others, and so argued that the anti-social tendency was in fact a sign of 'hope' (p.309), and should be understood as such.

1.2.4 Systemic Frameworks

Family life cycle perspectives see adolescents within the ever changing contexts and transitions that families face. As adolescence progresses, Carter and McGoldrick (1989) argue that the family system has to become more of a 'preparation centre' for adult life, rather than a base of protection and nurturance. Within this view, emphasis is placed on the meaning that is bestowed on the adolescent's behaviour rather than on adolescence in general as a time of turmoil. In this way, 'storm and stress' starts to look more like an interaction between family and the young person, as relationships rebalance and redefine (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

Systemic frameworks consider the ways in which problems within families can often become situated within individuals, as opposed to being seen as relational. Indeed in the last two decades, family therapy practice has seen the introduction of more Narrative Therapy (White, 1995) ideas that attempt to ameliorate the damaging ways in which adolescents can often become the focus or vessel for whole family problem narratives (Fredman, 2003).

1.2.4.1 Family Scripts

Attachment theory explores the importance of the parent/infant relationship. However, systemic ideas also argue for the importance of understanding parents' own experience of being parented. John Byng-Hall (1988) has written much about 'family scripts' and 'legends', and the way in which these may influence how the adolescent's behaviour is experienced within families. Byng-Hall (1995) articulated the conceptual idea of corrective and replicative scripts as important blueprints in parenting practice. In most cases parents do not want to replicate negative experiences from their own childhood and so attempt a corrective parenting script (Dallos, 2013). Parent and adolescent interactions that are characterised by considerable conflict can trigger unresolved trauma from the parent's own youth which is said to often initiate corrective scripts (Dallos, 2013). For instance, corrective parent scripts triggered in the context of aggression might include a commitment to not having a violent man in the home, based on

the mother's own early experiences of domestic violence. Scripts triggered by early trauma can often be rigidly held, further compounding the adversarial relationship between adolescent and parent (Dallos, 2013).

1.2.5 Ecological Theories

For Bronfenbrenner (1977), the entry into adolescence was seen to involve the negotiation of continuously interacting social relationships. These social relationships are embedded within four major structural systems.

The first, the 'microsystem', is seen to be the immediate social environment which for adolescents is considered to include the home, school and peer network. It is argued that as the adolescent develops, these social contexts become increasingly complex as there are often entries and exits (Muuss, 1996). Families also have to make profound shifts in relationship patterns across generations in response to the transition into adolescence (Preto, 1989).

The next level within Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is called the 'mesosystem', and this is seen as a collection of smaller microsystems. The quality of a mesosystem is judged on the nature of the relationships that may all function either in a congruent or divergent way (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In the case of young people who have very conflicted relationships at home and in school, and who are not involved in positive activities, it is likely that there are a limited number of microsystems, and the nature of the relationships between the systems is often adversarial. Furthermore these microsystems might also include a number of helping agencies who may or may not be working in union with the young person, family and each other. Within Bronnfenbrenner's (1977) model, a mesosystem signified by divergent aims and conflicted relationships would be described as impoverished, making the opportunities for adolescents to negotiate a smooth transition into adulthood less likely.

The ecosystem is the next layer in Bronfenbrenner's structure. This includes systems not specifically involving the young person, which may include the wider local community, local government, or the parent's employer. It is argued that

influences within these systems can play a significant role in the development of an adolescence characterised by challenges (Biglan, Brennan, Foster, & Holder, 2004). For example, communities low in socioeconomic status are associated with higher rates of adolescent crime, drug and alcohol use and risk behaviours (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Furthermore, exposure to adverse life experiences such as early maltreatment and growing up in chronically violent communities is consistently linked in research with the mental health of young offenders (Paton, Crouch, & Camic, 2009).

The widest layer of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) structure is the macrosystem, and this is broadly said to be the blueprint underlying the organisation of society at any particular time in history. This includes judicial and economic systems, cultural practices, religious organisations and broad networks of knowledge, to name but a few (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bandak (2005) argues that economic poverty is the single most important factor in making raising a physically and psychologically healthy child difficult. Having said this, it is often hard to pin-point exactly how poverty or inequity *gets under the skin*. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010), in their analysis of a broad range of health and societal issues, make a convincing argument that the highest rates of health problems are present in the countries that are the most unequal. The UK and USA have the highest level of income differences between rich and poor and also have the highest rates of physical and mental health problems. This is compared to poorer but more equal countries such as Greece, where there are lower rates of health problems (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

Using the UNICEF Index of Child Wellbeing, Pickett and Wilkinson (2007) compared outcomes for the 23 richest countries, and again concluded that those that are most unequal have the highest rates of ASB and mental health problems in children, as well as the lowest levels of educational performance. The complex interactions that inequity creates are examined, including the effects on social status, feelings of trust, access to health services and the capacity to parent. Indeed it is important to consider these ideas in relation to the conditions that Bowlby (1973) argued were significant in the development of securely attached children. It seems plausible that the capacity to meet a child's physical and

emotional needs in a consistent way might be considerably hampered by the context of inequity and its effects on communities' health and wellbeing.

It seems that there are complicated interactions that take place across the ecological structures that influence child and adolescent development. Thus, finding a positive and effective early adult identity is a complex process made all the more challenging in the context of an external reality characterised by adversity and inequity. Indeed, Lemma (2010) argues that a healthy confidence in oneself can be destroyed by the experience of trauma in adolescence. For the young people who are the most disadvantaged, the transition to adulthood through adolescence seems to be particularly complex and can involve repeated cycles of progression and backtracking (Right Here, 2008).

1.2.6 Relationship to Help

Within the negotiation of these different systems young people and families often have complex relationships with services and professionals. Reder and Fredman (1996) highlight the importance of understanding people's 'relationship to help'. They hypothesise that this can be influenced by a number of factors, such as early attachment experiences being re-enacted in contact with helping professionals. Beliefs about help are said to develop within different lived contexts which all contribute to forming the cultural stories and scripts that families hold about what 'help' means (Reder & Fredman, 1996). Lemma (2010) argues that for traumatised and challenging young people, recognising a need for help can signify unbearable feelings of shame and vulnerability. These internal experiences in combination with the reality of, at times, inconsistent and unhelpful input from professionals can make for complicated relationships to help. Beliefs about help can provide important information for understanding the barriers young people may have in accessing resources in challenging contexts (Christie & Fredman, 2001).

1.2.7 Section Summary

Selected theories and frameworks have been examined in this section to develop an understanding of how ‘troubled’ adolescents have been conceptualised. There appears to be some consensus that adolescence can be at times characterised by both internal and external exploration. The attachment relationship and its influence on development has been examined, as well as the ways in which parents’ own experiences of being parented can influence the meaning of adolescent behaviour. For some adolescents, this time can signal a period of unrest as the transition into a more adult position is made, however, for some this point of transition can bring both threats and opportunities. Adolescents are also required to negotiate a continually changing social environment that is affected by a number of influences both known and unknown to them. Young people who experience multiple disadvantages are expected to negotiate a considerably more complex and poorly resourced structure.

It is now important to consider the ways in which young people whose adolescence is characterised by significant challenges have been thought about in legislation. The next section will examine how the state has intervened when risks and turmoil becomes too great.

1.3 The Legislative Context of Intensive Family Interventions

Contrary to political rhetoric, interventions targeting adolescents and families are not new, with the concept of ‘problem families’ emerging in social work practice in the 1940s (Parr, 2009). Biehal (2005) argues that since the introduction of the Children Act 1948 there has been on-going tension between ‘state paternalism’ and ‘the defence of the birth family’ (p. 4). Throughout the 1950s a number of factors encouraged attempts to prevent unnecessary admission into care, including the observation of poor outcomes for children in care, the high costs of the state looking after children and the influence of Bowlby’s (1951) work on the importance of maintaining parental attachments. This led to the Young Persons

and Children Act 1963 which set out statutory duties to provide assistance to families in need, marking a shift from state paternalism to a greater emphasis on providing support for families (Biehal, 2005).

However, throughout the 1970s a number of cases of child abuse weakened the argument for supporting families. This in turn shifted thinking away from state involvement in prevention work towards more decisive action once parenting was viewed as impaired (Biehal, 2005). The 1980s saw renewed interest in preventative work and concern around the outcomes for children leaving care. This change in emphasis influenced the formation of the Children's Act 1989, which outlined local authorities' responsibility not only to safeguard children but also to promote their upbringing *by their families*. The Children's Act 1989 also enshrines in law the concept of parental responsibility (Coulter & Rapley, 2011). Emphasis was now placed on both the state's role in providing support for families, and on the ultimate responsibility for child welfare being firmly placed with parents (Parr, 2011). To some extent, this demonstrated a unification between competing political ideologies, reflecting both the influence of conservative anti-collectivism that aimed to reduce the role of the welfare state by emphasising the responsibilities of parents, whilst simultaneously outlining ways in which families in need would be supported by external agencies (Biehal, 2005).

1.3.1 Current Legislation

The last Labour government brought in a wide range of legislative powers aimed at tackling ASB. The political discourse tended to focus on two strands: *support* for parents struggling with younger children and *accountability* for parents of older children exhibiting ASB (Biehal, 2005). This is most notably illustrated in the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act which introduced the means by which the state can take action against parents for the ASB of their child (Coulter & Rapley, 2011). Critical analysis of this legislative development has argued that the linking of ASB with problem families has created a theoretical rationale based on 'individual deficiencies' rather than seeing contextual constraints such as poverty as significant limiters to family life and parenting (Parr, 2009, p. 1258). The effect of this legislative linking means that ASB is seen

as driven by forces internal to the family, the foremost of which becomes parenting (Parr, 2011). It is argued that this context legitimises the significant extension of the state's involvement and ability to intervene in families and the domestic sphere (Prior & Paris, 2005).

May 2010 saw the election of the current Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government. Just over one year later, young people rioted in many cities across the UK. Although pertinent to this research, it is beyond this introduction to discuss the causal factors of these riots. What is significant are the policies that were generated to respond to these events, most notably the Troubled Families agenda (Casey, 2012). David Cameron has pledged to target 120,000 of the country's most troubled families before the 2015 general election (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012). A 'troubled' family is currently defined as one in which there is ASB, low school attendance and where parents are classified as high-cost to the tax payer (Lloyd, Wollny, & Gowland, 2011). The proposed method of intervention seems to mirror the approach taken by the previous Labour government.

1.3.2 Section Summary

Biehal's (2005) description of an on-going tension between state involvement and parental responsibility seems to be as present as it ever has been. What this section has illustrated is that challenging adolescents have been intervened with for much of the last century in different ways and with different emphasises. The next few years will see considerable resources and focus being placed on the outcomes of projects funded by the Troubled Families agenda. These interventions and their theoretical underpinnings will be examined in detail in the following section.

1.4 Literature Search

Various combinations of the terms '*adolescence*', '*family interventions*', '*conduct disorder*' and '*antisocial behaviour*' were used to search for relevant literature.

Ebsco Host was used to search the following electronic databases: PsycINFO, Psych Extra, Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection, and Psych ARTICLES. Search terms such as 'conduct disorder' entered individually generate vast quantities of research examining epidemiology, aetiology, outcomes, cost and so forth. Because of the more specific focus of this research being on young people's experience of certain interventions, it was necessary to refine the search criteria. The search terms '*family interventions*' and '*conduct disorder*' entered simultaneously with the filter *adolescence (13-17 years)* generated 20 results. Those that were relevant have been incorporated into the literature review; however, most examined the effectiveness of parenting interventions with younger children. The same search terms were used with a filter that selected only papers that used qualitative research methods, and this generated 6 matches. None of these papers were in fact qualitative in their design and few provided much insight into the specific topic under examination. The most relevant matches have been incorporated into the examination below. Athens was also used to search NHS health and social care databases such as the Medline, with relevant papers being incorporated. Other recognised independent health databases in medicine and healthcare specialties such as the Cochrane Library were also searched. Google Scholar was used to search for relevant references found in articles and for government and legislative documents. However, the most relevant papers (Lemma, 2010; Tighe, Pistrang, Casdagli, Baruch, & Butler, 2012) were recommended by other researchers interested in this area.

1.5 Intervention and Treatment Approaches

Different theoretical conceptualisations of adolescence have been examined, with the aim of developing a theoretical framework with which to understand the challenge that some adolescents experience. Significant legislative developments have been reviewed in order to situate the way in which the state has conceptualised this problem. It is important now to consider more closely the intervention models that have been developed and practised on the ground.

1.5.1 The Influence of Cognitive Frameworks

Some approaches draw on cognitive theory in understanding adolescent ASB and argue that certain patterns of thinking initiate and maintain challenging behaviour in young people (McCrory & Farmer, 2009). Interventions tend to employ strategies that focus on social skills training, improving emotional and behavioural regulation and anger management (McCrory & Farmer, 2009). Meta-analysis looking at the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in reducing conduct problems report small or moderately positive outcomes (Bennett & Gibbons, 2000). Based on the complexities of the environments in which these young people exist it is argued that individual cognitive approaches have limited effectiveness if concurrent changes are not made in the young person's wider context. Indeed, a number of researchers argue that it is essential that young people's environments change in tandem with new ways of thinking (Guerra *et al.*, 2005).

1.5.2 The Influence of Behavioural Frameworks

Founded on principles of behavioural theory, Parent Management Training (PMT) argues that young people's conduct problems are initiated and maintained by influences in the family and social environment (McCrory & Farmer, 2009). PMT aims to teach parents new ways of reinforcing more desirable behaviour. In the late 1990s the UK saw the uptake of various schemes informed by this theoretical position. These included The Incredible Years Programme (Webster-Straton & Reid, 2003) and Triple P: The Positive Parenting Programme (Sanders, 1999). McCrory and Farmer (2009) argue that there is a large body of research that provides evidence for the effectiveness of PMT approaches in pre-adolescent age children, but there is much less evidence that this approach alone is effective in managing the behaviour of adolescents. A review of two studies on persistent offenders indicated that whilst there can be short term improvements in the interactions between the parent and child, no detectable change was observed in the functioning of the family as a whole (Biehal, 2005).

1.5.3 The Influence of Systemic Frameworks

The most researched form of systemic intervention is Multisystemic Therapy (MST) (Henggeler & Borduin, 1990). MST has been designed to prevent reoffending and improve behaviour by changing the systems around the adolescent (Carr, 1999). The MST intervention consists of an individual therapist working closely with the family for approximately 3-5 months, building up a systemic formulation and using a variety of techniques to support change. MST has been studied extensively, including more than 15 Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) that indicate reduction in ASB and offending (Borduin, et al., 1995; Henggeler, Cunningham, Pickrel, Schoenwald, & Brondino, 1996), although after 25 years of rigorous study, Tighe *et al.* (2012) argue that little is still known about how families experience the intervention.

Although MST is often cited as the most effective intervention for adolescents and families with complex needs, a review of eight of the RCTs has called into question this taken-for-granted understanding (Littell *et al.*, 2009). The authors argue that most of the RCTs have been conducted by the developers of the intervention, have not included unpublished studies containing negative findings, and that the largest fully independent study found no significant difference between MST and a range of other youth offending services. Littell *et al.* (2009) suggest that the evidence to support MST's effectiveness is at this stage inconclusive. Currently, a large trial named START, led by University College London, is piloting MST projects across ten UK sites to ascertain the effectiveness of MST in the UK. The findings of this large research project will no doubt further illuminate our understanding of this model.

1.5.4 Mentalization-Based Treatments

In the last decade psychoanalytic and attachment theories have influenced the development of Adolescent Mentalization-based Integrative Treatments (AMBIT) (Asen & Bevington, 2007; Bevington & Fuggle, 2013). Mentalization is said to be the capacity to interpret the mental states and actions of oneself and others (Fonagy & Bateman, 2006). The AMBIT model holds these ideas at its core and

has developed a framework, including tools for practitioners to use when working with this population. The model emphasises the importance of supporting parents and young people to mentalize, but also aids staff in taking a mentalizing stance towards what can often be very challenging work (Bevington & Fuggle, 2013). Within this approach, a key belief is that the capacity to mentalize is significantly hampered in the context of conflict and high levels of emotion (Fonagy & Bateman, 2006). Practitioners therefore work to reduce conflict to enable families to start holding one another in mind and subsequently improve family functioning.

1.5.5 Integrative Social Work Models

Family Interventions Projects (FIPs) have become the most commonly used intervention model, and were introduced by the Labour government in 2006 (Respect Taskforce, 2006). FIPs appear to be formed using an integrative model that draws on systemic and behavioural approaches and are influenced by local practice-based knowledge and resources. Within the intervention, families are provided with support to identify goals in order to reduce ASB. Workers are required to understand a complex set of issues and develop a support plan (Parr, 2009). The FIP model of intervention is being recommended by the government in the current Troubled Families intervention strategy. They advocate for interventions to offer a dedicated worker to provide practical support, take a whole-family approach and be intensive and community based (Department for Communities and Local Government , 2012).

The on-going success of FIPs nationally is hard to gauge. Early reports indicated that the initial positive outcomes for the targeted families dwindled over time (White *et al*, 2008). Gregg (2010), in his analysis of a number of FIP evaluations suggests that FIPs have targeted false 'causes' of ASB and failed to consider the role of mental health and family functioning. Parr (2009) argues that a critical commentary on the use of FIPs has 'alerted us to the potentially coercive and disciplinary nature of the projects' in their aim of changing problem families (p.1262). Although the most recent large scale evaluation claims that FIPs are successful in reducing ASB and crime (Lloyd, Wollny, & Gowland, 2011), the evidence is less conclusive about their success in improving education and

employment outcomes, and there is limited evidence to indicate that FIPs improve family functioning (Lloyd *et al.* 2011). Although critical commentators draw our attention to these issues, there is also recognition that interventions like FIP do have the capacity to provide multiply disadvantaged families with practical, solution focused and systemic support (Parr, 2011). Indeed, many professionals report that family interventions allow them to offer comprehensive and practical support in a way that is lacking in most mainstream social work practice (Parr, 2009).

1.5.6 Section Summary

The main theoretical approaches to intervention have been discussed, and examples of how these theories translate into a number of models and approaches have been given. It seems there are a variety of different approaches that place a different emphasis on the social, the psychological, and some suggest the punitive (Parr, 2011). Overall, what is clear is that the effect of such interventions in families' lives can be considerable, and, with a large collection of professionals involved, the pace of change can be rapid. It is now appropriate to introduce the specific service in which this research will take place and then consider what is known and also not known about families' experiences of these types of interventions.

1.6 The Current Research

The service in which this research is being conducted provides intensive psychological and social care support to families in order to prevent family breakdown and reduce ASB. The service was set up in 2006 in line with a legislative drive and in response to the re-emerging understanding that the psychological, social, educational and vocational outcomes for young people entering the care system were poor (Department of Education and Skills, 2006; Forrester, 2008). Furthermore, out of home placements were seen as unnecessarily expensive and so local authorities were tasked with supporting families to keep young people at home.

It is important to give some detail about the nature of the intervention so that it is possible to understand what the young people in this study are likely to have received. The service takes the form of a multidisciplinary team consisting of psychologists, social workers, teachers and youth outreach workers. The term intensive refers to the quantity of contact the family and young person is likely to receive which could be as many as 3 contacts a week, typically in the family home or in the local community. The first phase of the intervention is called the 'intensive period' in which there is a highest level of contact. After 6 months the intervention moves into the 'maintenance phase', whereby workers aim to maintain change that has occurred in the first phase.

In line with systemic and mentalization-based approaches, the multiple systems around the young person and family are targeted by each corresponding professional. For example, psychology and social work professionals work with parents intensively to start to support change in the way the young person is thought about and responded to in the home using predominantly behavioural strategies such as reward systems and new routines. Individual home sessions are completed with the parent as well as joint family sessions, in which issues are discussed and difficult conversations facilitated. Teachers in the team aim to reconnect the young person back into school and support the repair of relationships. This may involve school meetings and or practical help getting the young person to school regularly.

Youth outreach workers engage the young person in positive activities and provide support to manage relationships. Workers tend to see the young person twice a week in the context of doing activities and it is often the conversations that take place on the way to an appointment where the therapeutic alliance between young person and worker is formed. The team work alongside the existing case-holding child social worker who participates in the delivery of the intervention. This means that when the year long intervention ends the social worker is able to continue the work that has begun. The effect of the intervention on the family systems is often considerable. Change in parenting style can often take place rapidly as parents are supported to introduce boundaries and alter the existing dynamics between parent and child.

1.7 Parents' Experiences of Intensive Family Interventions

There appears to be a paucity of research examining how parents and adolescents experience the process of receiving these types of interventions. Research to date appears to focus on the effectiveness of family interventions, what works and what is cost effective. Likewise, research that has attempted to understand parents' experience of family interventions has tended to take more of an audit perspective, having focussed on parent satisfaction as opposed to a more nuanced psychological understanding of the process. Indeed, Tighe *et al.* (2012) argue that much is known about the outcomes of MST but little is known about the the process from the perspective of families. They conducted the first qualitaitive research with parents and adolecents of MST projects in which 21 parents and 16 young people were interviewed about their perceptions of the process. The results were grouped into two broad themes entitled 'Engagement in MST and initial process of change' and 'Outcomes are complex'. Results in these two themes indicated that families overall had a positive experience of MST but that outcomes were mixed. The intensive, community approach and the building of the therapeutic relationship emerged as significant factors in families' engagement in the service. Parents reported feeling more confident in their parenting, having a more positive outlook and an improved relationship with their child. However, some parents did not experience improvements, finding that the behavioural approaches had limited impact on the older adolescents in particular. But even in these cases, parents acknowledged that in attempting different strategies a better relationship with the young person was formed even in the absence of any obvious behaviour change.

Parents expressed a sense of unburdening their problems with the therapist and suggested that the experience of feeling 'respected, accepted, and cared for helped increase their self-esteem and confidence' (Tighe *et al.*, 2012, p.8). The authors acknowledge that these outcomes are not unique to MST and might be present in any good therapeutic relationship. However, Tighe *et al.* (2012) argue that the MST approach is particularly well suited to developing therapeutic alliances with a population of families who have mixed relationships with helping

professionals. Due to the lack of qualitative research in this area, very little is known about the types of relationships these families have with helping professionals.

In one rare instance of such research, Parr (2011) conducted a sequence of interviews with 5 mothers over the course of their involvement with a FIP intervention. This research examines more closely than previous research how these mothers experienced the process, and focuses more explicitly on the women's perceptions of the help they were offered. The mothers, who had experienced on-going professional intervention, described a sense of a 'disciplinary gaze' both from existing agencies and from the FIP workers (Parr, 2011, p. 731). Although the mothers experienced some aspects of the intervention as invasive and at times punitive, they also saw benefits in the practical support they received to improve their housing, access to financial support and in the reintegration of their child into school and activities. Similarly to the findings of Tighe *et al.* (2011), the mothers spoke about appreciating the sensitive, befriending role the workers took in their often isolated lives. Parr (2011) compares these positive and negative experiences to the parallel discussion in the academic literature, in which critical commentators acknowledge that this type of intervention can affect instrumental change in multiple domains of families' lives, but warn against overlooking the potentially coercive and punitive influence that family interventions can have and the effects that this may have on the dynamics between families and professionals (Parr, 2011).

Although the perspective of young people was present in both studies, the parent perspective is the primary focus of both. Having provided some sense of the qualitative research on this topic, it is now important to examine the literature concerned only with young people's experiences.

1.8 Adolescents' Experiences of Intensive Family Interventions

Naylor, Lincoln, and Goddard (2008) report on what young people found helpful when engaging with a specialist mental health service for adolescents who had

offended. They valued staff who were respectful and appeared committed to helping them, and also placed great importance on a flexible outreach way of working and on interventions that they felt reflected their needs. Although these findings are helpful for this study as a similar population of young people participated, the intervention was not an Intensive Family Intervention.

In a paper by Harris and Allen (2011), adolescents said that the multi-agency work that felt most effective to them was that which had a direct impact on their lives and was aimed at both themselves and their families. Likewise, the authors note that there was considerable disengagement with services that were perceived as being disconnected to young people's perspectives and needs. Dallos and Comley-Ros (2005) give a more psychologically informed analysis of the experience of a mentoring service for young people who had been in care, had severe problems in their families and engaged in incidents of offending. Drawing on attachment theory, the authors interpret young people's experiences of their relationships with their mentors as something like a relationship with a mother figure (Klein, 1952). For most of the young people, this was an imagined figure due to the young people having had very inconsistent parenting experiences. Young people noted that the care, attention and encouragement they received from the mentors aided the development of a trusting relationship. Significantly, this was seen to generalise to other relationships in line with attachment theory. Dallos and Comley-Ros (2005) argue that this helped the young people start to develop more coherent stories about themselves, not just through actions but through talking. Prior to the mentoring, talking to adults seems to have been experienced as something to mistrust.

Using a psychoanalytic frame, Lemma (2010) examines the relationship between young people and their key workers at Kids Company, a UK children's charity. Lemma (2010) argues that there is a three stage process that occurs in the relationship between these traumatised young people and key workers. The theme 'Titrating Intimacy' examines the ways in which young people use both the physical space and their relationship with staff to move towards a place in which they may be able to accept and acknowledge their need for help. Similarly to the

Dallos and Comley-Ros (2005) findings, this research showed that engaging with key workers, for some young people, is their first experience of a trusting relationship.

The papers discussed above give a rich indication of some of the experiences that marginalised young people have in different services. What remains unclear is how young people experience Intensive Family Interventions that incorporate some elements of mentoring but also aim to alter family dynamics. The following short sections will outline the gaps this research hopes to fill.

1.9 Areas Neglected in Research

1.9.1 Experience of Intensive Family Interventions

The researcher worked for two years in the service that is the focus of this research and observed there was sometimes a limited understanding amongst professionals of the ways in which young people who are categorised as requiring Intensive Family Interventions make sense of being viewed in that way, experience the process, and understand their position.

1.9.2 Adolescent Participation

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child and subsequent legislation enshrines in law the necessity for young people to have a say and express their views on the experiences they have in relation to the interventions they receive (Right Here, 2008). This research may therefore contribute to greater adolescent participation in our understanding of service delivery.

1.9.3 Beyond Service Evaluation or Audit

This research project aims to go beyond a statistics-focussed understanding of young people's satisfaction with services by attempting to explore the psychological experience of receiving interventions of this nature and the ways in which young people make sense of the subsequent change that can occur in the

wider systems that they inhabit. It seems that neglected within the literature is a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which the adolescents themselves conceptualise the experiences they have. It is within these conceptualisations that we may begin to understand what it is like to be 'anti-social' and what it is like to be seen as 'troubled'.

The findings will be representative of a group of young people who are seen by society and professional networks as posing a particular problem. It is hoped therefore that the findings of this study will be of use to professionals in their work, and give voice to the experiences of these marginalised young people.

1.9.4 Research Questions

Based on all that has been discussed the following research questions will be asked:

- How do young people make sense of themselves and their contact with Intensive Family Interventions?
- How do young people make sense of some of the changes that can take place in the systems that they inhabit?
- In what ways do young people feel they are viewed by intervening agencies, and how do they, in turn, view those agencies?

2. METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

The following chapter will outline the methodology used in this study. This will include the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach, the epistemological position taken and a description of the theoretical underpinnings of the chosen method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This will be followed with a description of the fine detail of the method, information on how participants were recruited and how the interviews were conducted. This chapter concludes with a detailed description of the stages of analysis in order to make the process as transparent as possible.

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Adopting a Qualitative Design

Three main factors were considered important when deciding to use a qualitative methodology. Firstly, there has already been a considerable amount of quantitative research conducted on this population of young people, including 15 RCTs examining rates of offending behaviour, ASB, school attendance, family functioning and longer term outcomes (Henggeler & Borduin, 1990; Henggeler *et al.* 1996; Henggeler *et al.* 1998). Secondly, the service had outlined a possible sample number which was not sufficient for robust quantitative research but was more suited to an in-depth qualitative analysis. Thirdly, because the aim of this research was to understand more about the idiosyncratic experience of young people receiving intensive family interventions – the ways in which they make sense of their world and experiences – it was decided that a qualitative methodology was more suitable. Indeed, nuanced understandings of psychological experiences are not easily accessed through quantified, predetermined methods and thus a qualitative approach was seen to give the opportunity to explore some of the unknowns in this area of study (Barker, Pistrang, & Elliot, 2002).

2.1.2 Justification for Choosing IPA

It was clear from the outset that what was lacking in the literature was an account of young people's experiences. A method was therefore required that could capture subjective experience but also situate those experiences within the complex social, cultural and professional systems in which the adolescents exist. Larkin, Watts, and Clifton, (2006) argue that IPA, compared to other phenomenological methods, enables the researcher to situate participants' accounts in broader social and cultural contexts, but also remains wedded to individual experience. In the early stages of the project development the author considered recording live sessions with the young people and analysing them using more discursive approaches that place emphasis on language as an instrument in constructing reality rather than language accessing experiences (Willig, 2008). Although this would have been an interesting project, this approach may not have sufficiently accessed adolescents' views on and stories of their own experiences in the way that was sought. Advocates of IPA claim that the method provides a more robust and detailed examination (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) of experience compared to similar methods, such as Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA tends to be used in larger sample sizes and compared to IPA does not place as much significance on researcher reflexivity, an element that was considered important due to the researcher's prior relationship to the service. The method of Grounded Theory was considered, but after developing the research aims further, it was decided that the project should be more focused on subjective experience rather than on developing a model of social process (Harper & Thompson, 2012).

2.1.3 Epistemological Position

Larkin *et al.* (2006) argued that psychology's 'complex epistemological field' makes it difficult for the researcher to easily perform the balancing acts required in producing a good piece of qualitative research. It could also be argued that the need to have an epistemological position forces an identification with one particular viewpoint, making it less flexible and open to opportunities for fear of being epistemologically incongruent. However, in stepping back, it became clear

that a particular method need not be representative of the researcher's entire epistemological position or an exercise in '*nailing one's colours to the mast*', but that each project can enable the exploration of different beliefs and methods that each have benefits and pitfalls.

For the purposes of this project I am adopting a predominately critical realist epistemological position. This epistemology assumes that there are phenomena to be examined – in this case, the young people's experience of the intervention, but that this phenomenon can only be partially understood through language (Larkin *et al.* 2006). This approach also recognises that both the young people and I will be engaged in an inter-subjective process of meaning-making. I will be attempting to make sense of the experience being made sense of by the young people (Smith *et al.* 2009). Alongside this overarching position I will also be adopting an interpretative phenomenological stance which will be enacted through the chosen method of IPA (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Aspects of this epistemological position and IPA's theoretical basis will be examined in the following sections.

2.1.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA was first proposed by Smith (1996), who argued that there was a need for a methodology that could capture both the experimental and the qualitative within psychological research. IPA is underpinned by three theoretical positions: phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography (Smith *et al.* 2009).

2.1.4.1 *Phenomenology*

Phenomenology is an umbrella concept used to describe a philosophical movement engaged in the study of being and experience. It was initiated by the philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and grew and expanded through the early twentieth century (Giorgi, 2010). Phenomenology acknowledged the multiple layers of contexts in which both participants and researchers exist, but argued that the researcher should attempt to 'bracket off' or *transcend* their existing understandings and taken-for-granted knowledge about the world (Larkin

& Thompson, 2012). This 'bracketing off', or the 'epoche', as Husserl called it, was thought to allow the researcher to reduce the layers of assumptions and preconceptions they held until they had arrived at a point of understanding the essence of a phenomenon (Langdrige, 2007).

Smith (2009) argues that Husserl's approach to phenomenology gave IPA its emphasis on the close examination of the content of lived experience, and furthermore provided IPA researchers with the theoretical rationale for reflecting on their own prior understandings. The 'bracketing off' of existing understandings has been a vital part of the process of this research, due to my prior work in the service studied. Although I had a sense of the young people that the service worked with and the conditions that would allow them to feel more able to speak, I also held a number of beliefs about how much and if the young people would talk to me about their experiences. This belief meant that often after the interviews I had a sense that not much had been said and it wasn't until I began to examine the data in-depth that I noticed the very concise and important things that had been said. Although I undoubtedly hold multiple beliefs and preconceptions about the work and the young people, in using reflexive methods these beliefs can begin to be examined in as transparent a way as possible. See Appendix A for an extract of a peer reflexive group in which these issues are considered further.

The phenomenological underpinnings of IPA have come under scrutiny and criticism on a number of grounds. Giorgi (2010) argues that in the transformation from philosophy to 'science', inevitable modifications are made that have led to the misuse or misrepresentation of the broader phenomenological movement. In Smith's (2010) riposte he asserts that he has argued for the importance of researchers understanding the history and theoretical roots of phenomenology in order to bring a genuinely phenomenological stance to the method. The following section will explore IPA's relationship to the theory of interpretation, that of hermeneutics. It is important to note that in taking a hermeneutic position, IPA inadvertently places less emphasis on one of the core features of phenomenology (Langdrige, 2007).

2.1.4.2. *Hermeneutics*

In its origin, hermeneutics was the art and science of textual interpretation, most notably of biblical texts. As a philosophical movement, it has been engaged in the interpretation of a range of historical and literary texts (Smith *et al.* 2009). The influence that theoretical hermeneutics has on IPA can be seen in its approach to the interpretation of meaning in participants' accounts of experience. Advocates of IPA acknowledge that the route from experience, through consciousness and into language is not straightforward. They argue that it would be naïve to assume a direct connection between a description of the world and the world itself (Larkin *et al.* 2006). Heidegger (1927) argued that there are phenomena that exist and can be partially understood, but that the meaning bestowed upon or taken from these experiences is mediated by the contexts in which we exist (Langdridge, 2007). Heidegger's concept of 'Dasein' or 'being there' referred to the idea that people are always located in meaningful contexts (Larkin *et al.* 2006). Rather than reducing to abstractions, IPA takes on this Heideggerian phenomenological position that all interpretations are made from somewhere (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

This idea has helped considerably in the reflexive process and has encouraged me to examine the contexts from which my interpretations may be originating. I approached this study with a number of identities that may influence the research. Some of these are introduced here and will be developed further throughout. I am 30 years old. I identify as white British, as female, and as a trainee clinical psychologist. My professional status, age and ethnicity are all likely to have created some distance between myself and the participants. Although this distance may have had some impact on what young people shared with me, it also meant I was able to remain curious about their worlds and ask questions from a position of 'not knowing'.

My training at the University of East London has exposed me to a much more critical approach to psychiatric diagnostic categories and the ways in which people can become classified. My training has also emphasised the importance of viewing problems within context. I therefore bring this frame to the research,

and acknowledge that this is likely to influence how I might conceptualise the young people's experiences – with a tendency to focus on systemic, contextual factors. Having said this, I am currently on a psychodynamic training placement in which I am thinking and learning about adolescents from a much more analytic frame. When applying these theoretical ideas to a qualitative method involving a participant and researcher, the picture becomes more complex, as both people are interpreting and both are existing in contexts that influence their interpretations. Smith *et al.* (2009) describe this as the 'double hermeneutic': the researcher making sense of the participant making sense. Through the process of reflexivity, the researcher becomes more aware of themselves in the interpretation, with the aim of arriving at a position described as 'experience close' – as opposed to far – from the participant's account (Smith, 2011, p. 9).

2.1.4.3 Ideography

The third major theoretical influence on IPA is an ideographic approach to knowledge (Smith *et al.* 2009). IPA's commitment to the idiographic is manifested in its analysis of each participant's experience and the individual meaning and significance of that experience for each person. Once a case-by-case analysis has been performed there is a search for patterns across all cases, looking in detail for the convergence and divergence of experience within the sample (Larkin *et al.* 2006). In this way, IPA claims to be able to present shared themes as well as the unique way in which themes are lived by different participants. Harper (2013) warns against moving too quickly to the cross sectional and therefore losing the rich particularities of each individual experience.

2.2 Ethical Considerations

The research proposal was reviewed by the University of East London's research sub-committee and given approval (Appendix B). Following this, ethical approval was obtained from the University of East London research ethics board (Appendix C). The borough's Social Care Children's Services research

application form was completed and approval was granted (Appendix D). Approval was also given by the Head of Service of the Children in Need department in which the service is situated. The researcher consulted with the Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC) who advised that that the previous levels of ethical approval were sufficient (Appendix E).

2.2.1 Paying Participants Using Vouchers

The payment of participants in research is a controversial area with many researchers arguing that any introduction of payment has important ethical implications. It is argued that payment can lead to a coercive context in which the participants may, for example, feel unable to exit the research (Wendler, Rackoff, Emanuel, & Grady, 2002). Within this study it was decided that participants would be offered a £10 gift voucher and also a certificate to mark their involvement in doctorate research as a possibly useful token towards their CVs. The decision to do this was considered carefully in the context of the practical and ethical implications this raises (Head, 2009). It was felt that for this largely marginalised and low socioeconomic group of adolescents, some reimbursement for their time was important. Indeed, some researchers argue that omitting to pay participants can be unethical (Head, 2009). This is based on the argument that payment can in some way equalise the power imbalance between researcher and researched (Head, 2009). Having considered these dilemmas it was decided to offer the small incentive indicated above.

2.3 Method

2.3.1 Participants

Consistent with the principles of IPA, it was important to interview participants who would be able to offer insight into the phenomena under investigation (Smith *et al.* 2009). In order to satisfy IPA's criteria of obtaining a purposive, homogeneous sample, a number of inclusion criteria were decided upon prior to commencing recruitment.

2.3.1.1 Inclusion Criteria

It was deemed important that young people should be recruited from within the same service and should have all experienced at least six months of the intervention. Because of the service's eligibility criteria, all young people participating would be aged between 10 and 16 years old. In order to provide a service there has to be significant concern in the professional network that the young person is at risk of going into care. Young people are normally excluded or at significant risk of school exclusion, have an offending history or at risk of offending, display persistent and enduring violent and aggressive interpersonal behaviour and pose a significant risk of harm to themselves in the form of substance misuse, sexual exploitation and risk of absconding.

2.3.1.2 Participant Recruitment

Access to the young people was to some extent filtered by the service in that they provided me with a list of all the young people who fulfilled the criteria (N 20). Within a team meeting, this list was examined and it was decided that it was not appropriate to approach some of the eligible young people due to circumstances in their life. One young person's mother had recently died and others had moved out of borough the making ethical approval more complicated. I was therefore left with a list of 17 young people who were appropriate to contact.

These young people and parents were informed about the possibility of participating and provided with the 'information sheet', either by post or through key workers (see Appendix F). Once young people and parents had expressed an interest in the research, meetings were arranged. In a number of cases, the young person opted to be introduced to the researcher by their key worker before deciding whether to participate. Seven young people did not participate, either because no response was received to phone messages or letters, or because they explicitly declined. This is discussed in the critical review.

2.3.1.3 Obtaining Consent

Participating young people and their parents were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix G). Procedures around maintaining anonymity were explained to each young person and their parent and permission was sought to record interviews. Young people and parents were told how the data would be used and that the findings would be disseminated in this thesis and in clinical implications. Anonymity of data was maintained by assigning each participant a pseudonym and editing all identifying information, including the name of the service.

2.3.1.4 Participant Numbers

Smith *et al.* (2009) do not prescribe a sample size for doctorate level research, but suggest that typically between four and ten interviews are sufficient. Ten young people were recruited and agreed to take part in the research, which, in light of Smith *et al.*'s. (2009) opinions, is an appropriate number for the completion of IPA within a professional doctorate setting.

2.3.1.5 Participant Demographics

All participants who took part in this study live in a central London borough. Figure 1 details the demographics of the participants. Ethnicity and information about household structure was removed as it could reveal the identity of each participant. Five participants identified as Black British, two as white Portuguese, one as white Moroccan, one as white British and one as British Somali.

No.	Participant	Age	Length of interview (m:s)	Gender	Length of contact with service	Location of interview
1	Madison	14	38:03	F	12 months	School
2	Jade	16	27:20	F	10 months	Children's Services offices

3	Chloe	16	22:15	F	9 months	Participant's home
4	Vicky	13	29:44	F	12 months	Participant's home
5	Louise	16	30:49	F	12 months	Public park
6	Nadia	12	16:10	F	14 months	School
7	Ayana	15	32:20	F	11 months	Children's services offices
8	Joe	16	39:09	M	14 months	Public park
9	Liam	17	31:09	M	12 months	Café
10	Sam	12	14:27	M	14 months	School
Averages		14.7	28:08		12 months	

Figure 1: Participant demographics

2.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

The developers of IPA suggest that where possible rich data sets be obtained by giving participants the opportunity to tell a story, develop ideas and express themselves for as long as they wish (Smith *et al.* 2009). Based on this recommendation semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method of obtaining data. Long and Dart (2001) in their research with adolescents suggest that more rigid approaches are often not well received by adolescents.

2.3.2.1 Initial Consultation

Prior to writing the interview schedule the researcher consulted with one young person who currently receiving the intervention. This consultation helped the researcher gain a young person's view on the design of this project and what factors would be important to consider when planning the interviews. The researcher also consulted extensively with the service staff around the design and viability of the project, and visited an innovative community psychology project to speak with staff and young people about ways in which to approach this research.

2.3.2.2 Developing and Interview Schedule

Until recently, Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) facilitated the London regional IPA group. The author attended this group in order to gain information on developing the interview schedule (Appendix H). It seems that in general, overly extensive and detailed schedules are seen to be constraining, and can result in the agenda of the interviewer taking over from what the participants have to say. Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) argue that a delicate balance needs to be achieved in the interview, whereby the researcher gently guides but the participant leads. Open questions are recommended, but the researcher may need to be more interventionist with some groups such as children and young people (Smith *et al.* 2009). All the interviews started with an broad open question. Some of the older adolescents spoke with very little prompting, while some of the younger participants required much more support to think about the topic. This will be explored further in the critical review.

2.3.2.3 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted using a conversational style, with the researcher keeping in mind the interview schedule (Kvale, 2007). The intention was to allow the young people to have an influence on the direction of the interview and not

compromise a relaxed atmosphere (Long & Dart, 2001). Indeed, in the consultation stage of this study, the young person consulted said: 'If it's long [a questionnaire], like 5 pages, I'd just give you random answers to get through it. If it's one page I'd probably give you real answers.'

2.3.2.4 Being Flexible with the Location of Interviews

The young person who was consulted also made reference to the benefits of taking a 'walking and talking' approach, describing finding the conversations that took place on the way to somewhere in some ways the most meaningful. It was also important to consider that some young people may not feel comfortable talking about their thoughts in the home (Long & Dart, 2001). The researcher made efforts to incorporate these ideas and recommendations in the way the interviews were conducted. Figure 1 indicates the location of each interview: parks, cafés, schools, young people's homes or on local authority premises.

2.3.2.5 Length of Interviews

The young person consulted said: 'I think half an hour is good amount of time to be interviewed, there is less pressure'. Although the researcher made it possible for interviews to continue for as long as young people wished, the average length of each interview was 28 minutes (range: 14-39 minutes). These figures mirror the length of interviews conducted in the Tighe *et al.* (2011) paper, where young people spoke on average for 30 minutes.

2.3.2.6 Safeguards for the Young People

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were given the right to withdraw at any time without stating any reason. The researcher had a plan of action with the service staff should any of the young people have become distressed during interviews. The researcher remained in close communication with the team who were alert to any possible issues occurring in the young person's life that may impact on their well-being in the interviews. It was not necessary to provide any of the participants with details of organisations which

provide free support and advice for young people in distress, which we had planned to do should it have been necessary. Following all the interviews, participants were debriefed and given the £10 voucher to a shop of their choice, and, for those that wanted it, a certificate indicating their participation in research was later sent to them.

2.4 Data Analysis

Researchers and developers of IPA offer, at times, conflicting perspectives on whether or not there is a prescribed method of analysing data. For the most part, proponents argue that IPA can be done in a number of ways. Having reviewed a number of different recommended steps, the researcher has developed the following method and has applied it to the analysis of the data (Flowers et al., 1997; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Osborn and Smith, 1998; Smith et al, 2009; Willig, 2001).

2.4.1 Initial Encounter with the Text

In order to illustrate each stage of the analysis I have included a section of Jade's transcript, themes tables, mindmaps, and then a final cross-case analysis diagram (see Appendices H-K in order). It is hoped that this will help to make the process transparent and show the development and evolution of my thoughts.

2.4.1.1 Transcription

Each complete interview was transcribed by the researcher, enabling the first initial encounter with the text to be a detailed one. Tilley (2003) argues that important analysis takes place in the process of listening and re-listening, which can be missed if the transcription is not performed by the researcher. The transcripts were anonymised by removing any details such as names, places or personal information which could identify the interviewee.

Following transcription, each individual interview was read in close detail with the aim of developing a sense of the overall structure. The researcher attempted to refrain from performing too quick a reduction, instead taking time to reflect on initial thoughts and striking observations. This detailed initial encounter with each text aided the researcher's ability to become absorbed in the data and so aided the process of entering each participant's world ideographically.

2.4.2 Identification of Initial Themes

The next stage was to begin to analyse each transcript with the purpose of establishing initial exploratory coding. This involves examining on a line-by-line basis the content and language used to describe the experience, noting contradictions and paradoxes in the account. Columns were created on each side of the text in which to annotate each line, and colour was used as a means of marking out important sections of speech (Appendix I).

2.4.2.1 *Different Layers of Exploration*

Three layers of exploration are suggested in the literature (Smith *et al.* 2009), and were followed in this research. The first layer of exploration is the descriptive level, which focusses on the content of what each participant said. Descriptive comments consist of noting key words, phrases and ways in which the experience was described. The second layer of exploration, the linguistic level, involves focusing on use of pronouns (such as 'I'), metaphors, pauses, laughter, tone and hesitation. The third and final stage of the initial coding focused on engaging with the data at a more interrogative and conceptual level. This stage aimed to take the analysis beyond the descriptive and linguistic and move towards concepts that may be common to all accounts. At this stage of the analysis the researcher introduced more psychological concepts with the aim of beginning to reach a higher level of abstraction (See Appendix I – the left hand column contains conceptual level comments).

2.4.3 The Clustering of Emerging Themes

Once the detailed stage of analysis was completed on all cases, the researcher began to map connections and patterns between the exploratory notes for each case. This stage of the process aims to reduce the volume of material without losing detail, in the hope of generating what Smith, *et al.* (2009) call 'emergent themes'. This stage in the process marked an analytic shift from working with the transcript itself to focussing on the exploratory notes, although these were still tied closely to the original data. This shift also signifies a move away from the participant's own interpretations and introduces more of the researcher's analytical interpretation. This stage is described as 'moving from the particular to the shared and from the descriptive to the interpretative' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 79). The 'emergent themes' were transferred from the annotated transcript into initial cluster groups within a spreadsheet with corresponding quotes and key words – for an example of this see the emerging themes relating to Jade (Appendix J). Then for each participant, a colour-coded mind-map was created using a computer program whereby the themes were placed into cluster groups that shared some commonality (Appendix K).

Writing a reflexive journal following each interview (Appendix L) and attending a peer supervision group aided the reflexive skills of the researcher in identifying if the themes that were emerging were from participant's accounts or from beliefs held by the researcher. Smith (2004) argues that it is the personal reflexive work done at each stage that often determines the quality of the final analysis.

2.4.4 Cross-Case Analysis

Using a computer mind-mapping programme, the researcher copied each individual participant's theme map into one document (Appendix M). The researcher then began the process of moving all the themes into small clustered groups. The process of abstraction consisted in identifying themes within themes and deciding on the nature of the super-ordinate themes. The super-ordinate themes convey the conceptual nature of the group while the sub-ordinate themes illustrate the convergence and divergence of experience. The aim was to end

with an abstracted and synthesised account of the group as whole. This process was done several times until the final super and sub-ordinate theme configuration was decided upon. The researcher has attempted to show the decision-making process for clustering themes, so as to make the decision process transparent (See Appendix N for an early draft of the theme formation).

2.4.5 Written Narrative Account Constructed

Having completed the cross-case analysis, the task was to construct a coherent and suitably reflexive account of the results. This is the opportunity to tell the story of how the themes were arrived at and the meaning bestowed on those conclusions. The narrative account will be given in the following section.

3. RESULTS

The following chapter presents the themes that have been generated following the analysis of the ten interviews. IPA requires that there is some analytical delineation between themes but it is important to note that the author sees relationships between the sub and super-ordinate themes and as a whole. The task for this chapter is to describe and articulate a story of each super-ordinate theme whilst synthesising the findings to achieve some sense of a coherent gestalt. The results section will discuss the most pertinent extracts to illustrate each theme. Appendix O illustrates the prevalence of the themes across the sample while appendices P-S give supplementary quotes for each theme in turn.

3.1 Introduction to the Whole

Following supervisor and peer input, and after presenting an earlier draft of the themes to the London regional IPA group, the following theme formation has been decided upon. After finding earlier drafts of the theme formation to be unnecessarily complicated, I have settled on a simple representation based on the concepts of *me*, *us*, *them* and *the outside world*. The author sees all these positions as fluid and interconnected and so it is hoped that the movement and complexity of the relationships between the different superordinate themes can be made explicit. Figure 2 represents the themes in a way that attempts to capture the interconnected nature of the concepts.

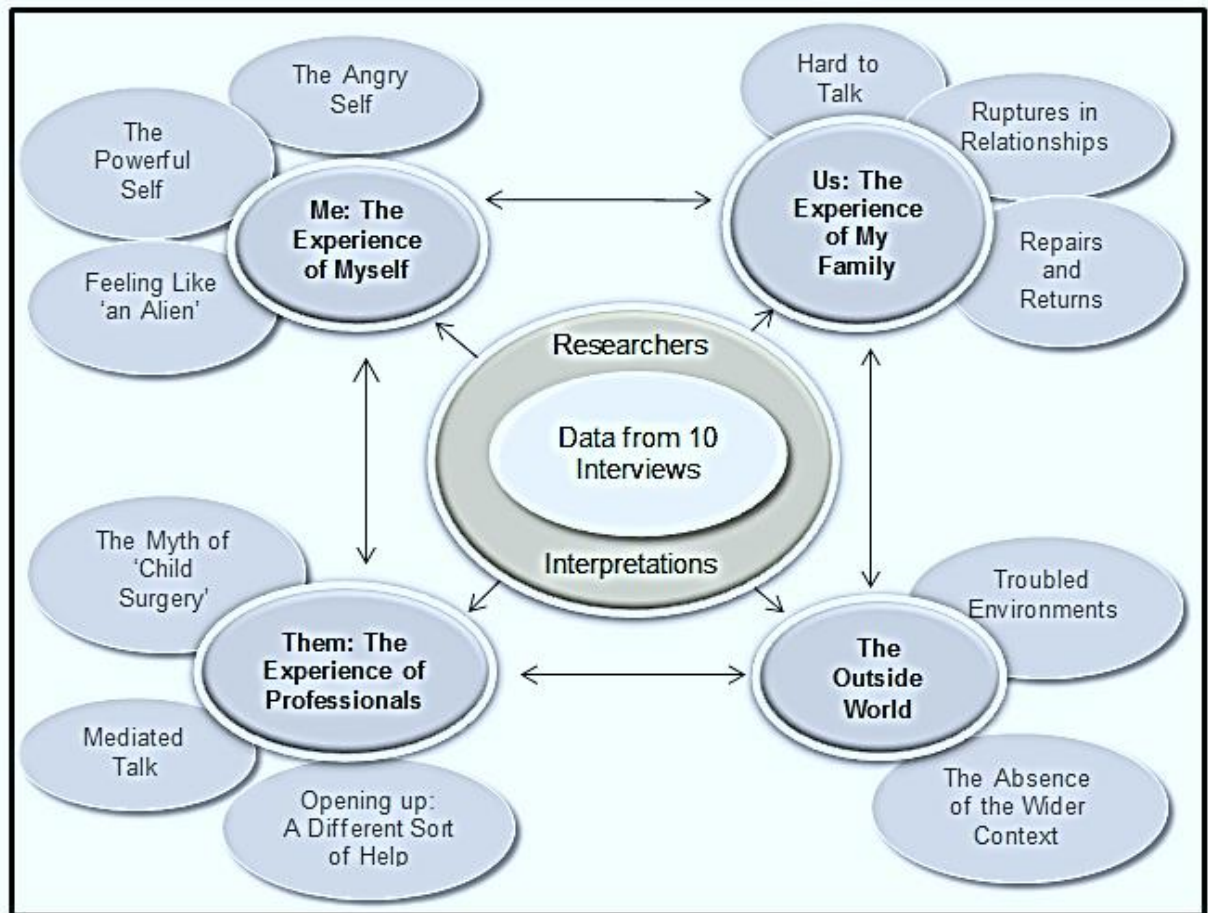


Figure 2: super-ordinate and sub-ordinate theme configuration

3.2 Me: The Experience of Myself

The theme 'Me: The Experience of Myself' (Figure 3) will examine the different ways in which the young people spoke about how they experienced themselves at different times.

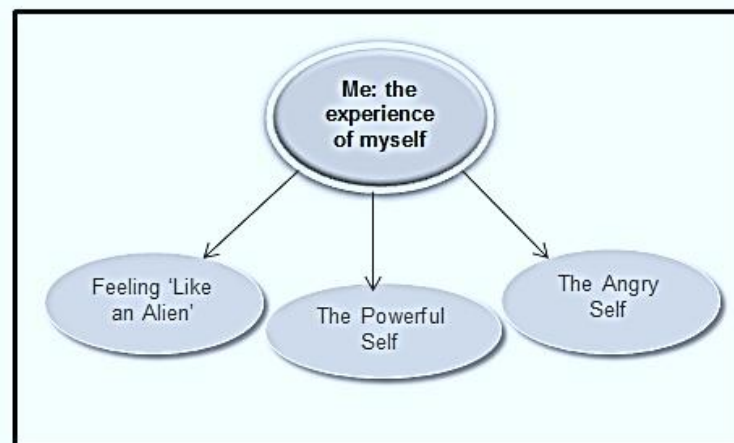


Figure 3: Me: The Experience of Myself

3.2.1 Feeling like 'an Alien'

Feeling like 'an alien' describes a very lonely place in which you are not understood and there is something in you that is different and difficult. This is the original passage where Joe spoke about these feelings:

I felt like I was an alien, that I couldn't talk to anyone or no one would understand what I was going through or what I felt like. (Joe, P17/L508)

To feel like an alien is also an experience of how you feel in relation to others, so in this way feeling like an alien appeared both as an internalised and a relational understanding of the problem. The alien position is one in which he cannot talk and no one else understands what he is going through. Aliens are foreign beings, unknown and not understood, and this is a powerful metaphor about how Joe experienced himself. He continued to discuss this in the following passage:

The things I did made me feel like an alien [...] it made me look like an alien but made me feel like no one could see me, well they did see me, they didn't notice me, didn't really care, just like looked away, walked away from me. (Joe, P18/L535)

In reference to the violent and destructive behaviour that had brought him in contact with services, Joe seemed to feel both *like* an alien but also intensely alienated from others, so much so that he experienced a feeling of being unseen and unnoticed. Some of the sentiments that Joe expressed are captured in Sam's words:

Sam: Like I was a monster.

R: Like a monster? What kinds of things would you be doing when you were like a monster?

Sam: Swearing at her, throw things, spitting. (Sam, P1/L31)

Like aliens, monsters are imaginary creatures, typically large and frightening. Although Sam's words are brief, they powerfully described how he can experience himself at times, when he is swearing, throwing and spitting, as characteristic of a monster. Sam seemed to see his behaviour in relation to his mother, but he also had a strong narrative about himself as the problem. Indeed, later he said when discussing how things could improve 'I'd have to stop being bad and everything' (Sam, P4/L103). Jade also employed the metaphor of a monster when describing herself at her most powerful and angry. It struck me as important to consider how often these young people may have been told they were monsters and whether they were using these metaphors because they had been assigned to them or because this is actually how they feel.

*It used to make me feel like I was just some big scary monster that just looked like it was going to crush him [her brother].
(Jade, P15/L478)*

Jade used "big" and "scary" to add further description to her monster image. She describes feeling this in relation to her brother and her ability to scare him into feeling as though she could crush him.

My brother really doesn't like it when I start, he gets scared and starts crying and he's quite...fragile. (Jade, P5/L138)

Jade seems to be aware of the effect of her behaviour on her brother and how frightening she can be. She later describes how her behaviour has meant that she feels excluded from her family and in this description there is a sense of her own vulnerability and potential for being frightened. She ends by describing her brother as fragile, and I was left thinking how fragile she may feel, existing at the edge of her family.

Liam appears to have a sense of himself as the problem in a number of the contexts in which he exists. He repeats the word 'bad' four times in describing himself at home, school, and in the community.

I was bad at home, bad at school, bad everywhere I went. Umm, yeah, just bad. That I needed everyone to do, tell me or do something, else I'll do something dumb. (Liam, P8/L221)

There is a sense of his own lack of agency in his actions when he describes needing everyone to do something for him, else he will do something 'dumb'. Could it be that a powerful belief about oneself as bad connects to a lack of control and agency over one's actions, as if controlled by the alien or monster within?

3.2.2 The Powerful Self

In a number of the young people's accounts there was a theme concerning a struggle for power. They describe battles with their parents in which they needed to have things their way and describe how attempts by their parents to set limits became the source of conflict. The phrase 'I don't like the word 'no'', emerged in a number of the interviews, which appeared to indicate that at times young people can feel omnipotent. For example, Madison recognises a strategy she employs with her mother,

I just don't like the word 'no', so I just don't speak to her or ask her things. (Madison, P3-L80)

Power was interpreted in other statements made by the young people. For example Jade seems to access a feeling of power when she is at her most 'monster'-like, which at times has a useful function.

Before it used to make me feel good. It used to make me feel big. (Jade, P16/L478)

There are a number of ways in which the need to feel powerful could be understood, and this will be examined in more depth in the discussion. However, in describing their own struggle against the word 'no', it seems that they are also talking about limits. Indeed, Vicky remembered that her mother tried to set limits, saying, '*She would try and ground me but I'd walk out*' (Vicky, P12/L354). Louise also described her need to take a powerful position and how this is translated in her behaviour.

I was like, I'm just fed up, I'm doing what I want. Then I went on some crazy thing where I would just do what I want. I got a tattoo; I got my tongue pierced. I think that when I want to do something which I want to do there is no way she can stop me. [...] She understands that it's better to let me do what I want because either way I'm going to do it. (Louise, P3/L77-89)

This could be seen as quite a typical adolescent desire to rebel. However, I felt that there was something more than rebellion in her account. There seemed to be a sense in which Louise feels more powerful than her mother, implied in her realisation that her mother was not able to limit her. In Louise's understanding of the re-negotiation, it was her mother who learned to allow Louise more freedom.

3.2.3 The Angry Self

Many of the young people seem to have a strong narrative around the presence of anger and how this translated into their relationships with others. Madison begins and ends the passage below with a quite rigid sense of her anger always being there, and it just being '*like that*'. Yet in between these two strong accounts

of herself, she also notes how the anger arose in the relationship between her and her mother and also between her and her school.

I always just got angry. Like that's why me and my mum always argue' cause I just got angry and I would argue with her. Like in school I would argue, I just got angry. It's just always been like that. (Madison, P8/L227)

The sense of Madison's lack of agency over the anger is echoed in Jade's account. Jade describes the anger as external to her, as something powerful that takes over her, and over which she has no control: 'I can't stop it, I can't control it' (Jade, P8/L221). Does 'it' in some way come to represent both her feelings of anger and also herself at her most out of control? This statement points towards the interrelated nature of the monster, the angry self and the powerful self. This interrelation is also present as Joe describes the anger he felt about his relationship at home and how this translated into his violent behaviour towards other young people in the community and at school.

It felt like I was getting somewhere. My anger was going, but it was going the wrong way. It felt like my anger was coming out of my body and going into someone else's body, which is what I went through, which didn't feel right at that, it felt right at that time but then afterwards when I realised what I did, it made me feel worse than I was before I hit him or hit her. (Joe, P4/L 106)

Joe sees the violence as getting him somewhere initially. The experience of being violent to others left him with the feeling of his anger leaving him and entering someone else, almost as if this angry negative energy could be passed from himself to someone else. Joe's use of the word 'body' leaves a very embodied sense of his anger – of how he used his own body to hurt the body of another. He reflects back on how it felt like it was getting him somewhere, but that in the end it made him feel 'worse'. He describes the consequence of this raw, bodily anger:

I was too violent for the school. So they said don't go then, so I basically got excluded for life. (Joe P13/L271)

Joe use of the phrase 'excluded for life' seems to parallel the sense of himself as excluded *from* life which connects back to his alienated feels about himself.

Liam describes a pervasive sense of his anger, but what is absent is a clearer sense of what this anger is about or what it is in response to.

I was annoyed and angry with like everything. Angry at life in general. Angry. (Liam, P1/L31)

It seems that these young people have a confused sense of whether the anger they feel comes from something within them, something troubled and deficient, or if it arises in response to others, something generated in interactions and in the course of relationships.

3.2.4 Summary

The metaphors that some of the participants used were powerful, and illuminate how they can experience themselves. It seems that at certain times they hold beliefs that link the source of the problem with something that comes from within them. The words 'bad', 'alien', 'monster', and 'frightening' are all indicative of an internalised problem position. In this way, it seems that they can exist at the edge of something very troubling and isolating. However, within this understanding of themselves there is also a strong sense of how they feel in relation to others and thus this internalised position often appears fluid.

In many respects, the experience of feeling like an alien and a monster seems to have a relationship with the powerful self. Within both narratives there is the sense of young people who feel out of control, a frightening and difficult place to be. This acting out of the powerful self suggests an internal world that might be striving for some containment and control.

3.3 Us: The Experience of My Family

The second super-ordinate theme (*Figure 4*) captures how the young people describe the ways in which they experienced different aspects of their family relationships. Within these descriptions there is the painful sense of how they felt at the edge of their families, pushed out and with the risk of rupture ever present. However, also present in most of the interviews was a sense that the intervention facilitated the young people to find a new position in their families.

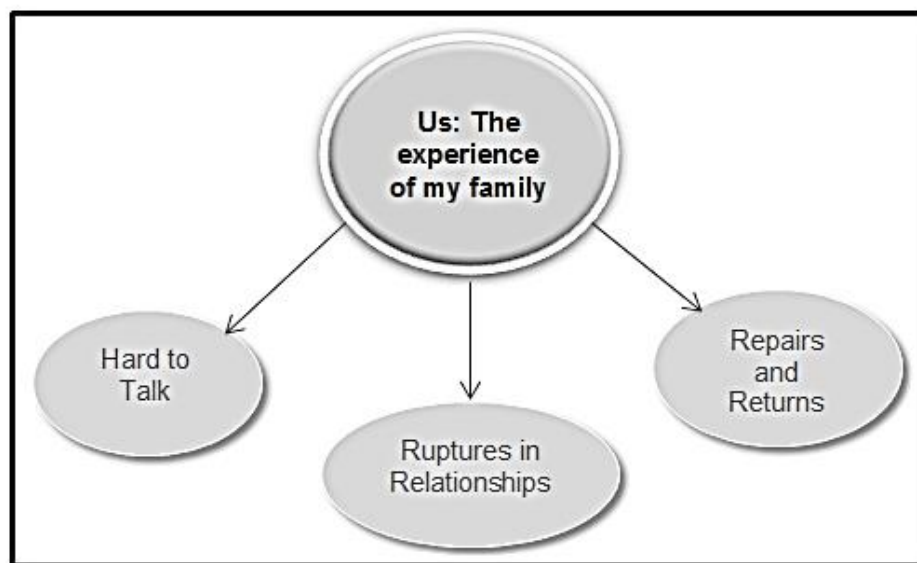


Figure 4: Us: The Experience of my Family

3.3.1 Hard to Talk

Some of the young people describe challenges in talking with their families and how this came to represent their difficult relationships. Ayana describes how conflicted the relationship between her and her family had become and how this was characterised by a lack of listening and understanding.

Disagreements, there was a lot. People don't understanding each other, or listen. (Ayana, P1/L20)

She goes on to say how she feels that 'talking and listening' is something people learn in primary school.

Yeah, just talking and listening.

You learn that in primary school. (Ayana, P12/L354)

This comment, implying that talking is a skill you learn as a child, was made with a sarcastic tone, suggesting she is almost berating herself and her family for having forgotten it. Likewise, Liam reflected on the experience of not wanting to have to listen to his mother. Talking for Liam seems to represent something difficult and almost invasive.

I just didn't want to listen to her no more. (Liam, P6/L171)

Madison describes how difficult she had found talking with her mother, she generalises her comments to emphasise her sense of them never speaking to one another.

I wouldn't speak to [mother's name] and she wouldn't speak to me, it would just be tension in the house and we wouldn't speak to each other. (Madison, P10/L298)

For Madison, the not speaking results in silence between her and her mother and signifies tension. In the passage below Madison starts by describing her grandfather talking to her in the past, and how difficult she found this. In total she repeats the word 'talk' six times as if to really show how frustrating being 'talked at' can be. She then shifts into the present continuous tense, which appears to demonstrate that she can still become frustrated by the experience of some types of talking.

He just sat there and talk and talk and talk yeah, and when people just talk and talk and talk at me yeah, just telling me things I don't like to hear, it gets on my nerves. (Madison, P13/L372)

Madison replicates this pattern of speech again as she shifts from the present tense to the future continuous. She repeats how she 'wouldn't tell her mum', as if she is either doubting her position or needing to remind herself of it.

I don't really tell my mum things, I wouldn't really tell her my feelings or how I felt, I wouldn't tell my mum. I can talk to her a bit more, but I don't talk to her as much as I would like to talk to her, I talk to her a bit more. Yeah, she talks to me a bit more. (Madison, P3-L71-75)

It seems she would like to be able to talk to her mother more, revealing a tension between what she feels occurs in the present and what she would like to occur in the future.

3.3.2 Ruptures in Relationships

Most of the participants described vivid accounts of their difficult family relationships alongside a sense of their longing for a better relationship. Madison describes the arguments that occurred with her mum and the effect that this had on her relationship with both her brother and the family unit.

When me and my mum used to argue when he was quite young, it had an effect on him because he seen me and my mum argue and he wouldn't want to speak to me 'cause he used to see the arguments with my mum and he wouldn't speak to me or play with me because of it. He would just be like 'go away'. And when I would come in the house he would just think it was all going to kick off with me and my mum so he would be like 'Oh no, Madison's here things are going to kick off'. (Madison, P11/L320-329)

There is a sense of her experience of the rejection, in the words 'Oh no, Madison's here'. In some ways, Madison seems to have become a symbol of

trouble, but she also sees the arguments as an interaction, and sees the effect that they have on her wider family system and her position within it. It seems there is a complicated relationship between arguing and being rejected. Jade also recounts a similar experience:

Me and my mum were fighting, like punch ups, I tried to push her down the stairs. Me and my mum used to really be at each other's throats. [...] So yeah, it just gets to that point where I almost did get taken into care. (Jade, P2-L33)

The phrase 'at each other's throats' gives an intense image of the ferocity of their conflicted relationship. Jade spoke about the violence with relative ease, but it was at the point where she spoke about her position in the family that emotion was revealed in her manner. Somewhat painfully she said, 'I feel like I'm pushed out of the family' (Jade, P4-L98). Jade described both a desire to remain within the family but also the pain she feels at being pushed out. For Joe, a similarly confusing relationship was also described.

It's the way we treat each other, it's like we are not friends or not family to each other, it's like we are enemies at this point. (Joe, P8/L221)

Joe's experience of his mother seems to have moved from 'the best relationship' to one in which he feels they are more like enemies. To hold these two experiences at the same time could lead to some very confusing feelings. This is revealed in Joe's statement below:

I don't like living without a mum, even though she is there it's like she's not there in a way. I have lost her. (Joe, P8/L217)

People commonly say they have lost someone when referring to death. In Joe's case this statement could reveal a sense of guilt that he may have done something to have lost her, or perhaps the experience signified something of a death for him.

Part of the mixed feelings about their family relationships was the young people not trusting their parents to take their side. Liam said, *'she would always take someone else's side, like my sister's side, like school's side, the police's side'* (Liam, P2/L39). This is implied to be the source of angry interactions and for Liam seems to have had a profound impact.

I didn't trust my mum. (Liam, P9/L257)

Present in many of their stories was the idea of being on the 'edge', between included/excluded, frightened/frightening, alien/alienated, to give just a few examples. Within Jade's account of how bad her relationships at home had got, she recounted her desire to be able to leave. Eventually she tried to end her life, which she said in hindsight was about a number of things, but was connected with a powerful need to separate.

It got to the point where I went through a really bad time and I tried to kill myself. [...] I said, 'you know what mum, I want to go up to the social worker and say to them just I need to live alone'. (Jade, P6/L181)

Jade had a strong narrative that other adolescents struggling with their parents had found ways of having a relationship with them again by leaving the family. Now living in semi-independent housing, Jade says that she feels that this has meant that she has retained a relationship with her family. She explains what it's like now when things get difficult.

I've got somewhere to go. I have somewhere to go. Don't have to go sit in the cold, thinking 'fucking bitch'. I've got somewhere to go. (Jade, P15-L443)

Her sense of relief is revealed in her repetition of 'somewhere to go'. Jade seemed sure that leaving had been the way that she had managed to maintain a relationship with her parents. However, she was clear that the intervention had

given her the opportunity to leave without complete rupture, and in a way that maintained the important connections she has with her family.

3.3.3 Repairs and Returns

It is now important to examine some of the hopeful changes the young people experienced in connection with the intervention they received. Sam said:

Me and my mum started opening up to each other, and so did me and my sister and my mum and me and everyone, yeah. (Sam, P4-L199)

In Sam's use of the words 'opening up', his sense of things being closed in his family is also revealed. He described how he started to experience his relationships being different:

We like share, we like, she like sits with me in the living room when I do my homework more often and watches me play X-box. (Sam, P8/L215)

Sam gave a very simple example of what 'opening up' to each other looks like in his family. Sharing things and being together in the same space seemed to have left Sam with the experience of a closer relationship. He adds, 'now I've started behaving and we are like best friends, also family' (Sam P2 -L49). His internalised sense of the problem remains, as he sees his own behaviour as the source of the problem, but now feels that they are friends and family. It seems that for Sam a new position in the family has been negotiated so that he can be part of the unit. The addition of 'also family' at the end of this sentence connects to a previous absence, that perhaps before he didn't feel part of the family or felt fearful about what could happen. Indeed, he says:

I didn't want to get taken away from my mum, so I stopped behaving bad (Sam, P6/L180).

Sam seems acutely aware of what could be possible, and has a narrative that relies heavily on his behaviour as the reason why he may be removed. In the changes that he has experienced, Sam seems to have found a way to negotiate a more secure position in the family. Madison, in contrast, appears to have experienced a change in her mother that has allowed repairs to take place.

And my mum don't argue with me, she's like more calm. Like before if I would come in late she would just kick off, 'why you late?' shouting. She don't do that anymore, she just like, 'you know what, you're not getting your money', yeah, that's it, she won't argue with me anymore, she don't shout at me. (Madison, P9/L276)

Madison's words seem to suggest that difficult tensions were lessening and that this allowed for some repairs in the relationship to take place. Madison seems to have understood this as something that came from her mother, but also out of an effort on her part to be in on time.

Joe describes the experience of finding his mother again, his experience of losing being examined in the previous theme.

I feel like I lost a mum, but when I went home it was like I found her again. I don't know what was wrong with her, I feel like I lost her. (Joe, P7/L198)

Joe's use of '*when I went home*' seemed to describe an emotional return as opposed to his physical return. He described feeling that he did not know what was wrong with her but also that he had *lost* her. This could mean that he felt that she was no longer available to him or that he may have done something to have lost her. It seems hard to interpret Joe's meaning which also reflects the confusion he seems to feel about his mother's emotional availability, whether she is there or not, lost or present. His sense of what the intervention had tried to change in his mother was as follows:

To try and talk to me differently, to try and listen to the things I needed, have to say. To try and help me with the things I needed help with. Not just to push me away and not to listen to me. (Joe, P9/257)

What seems to have helped Louise negotiate a new position with her mother is a perceived fairness that the intervention brought. She explains her previous sense of imbalance, moving into something more balanced.

I think she was really... um... um... what's the word, like unfair, like blamed everything on me, but I think when they started making goals with her, then it was kind of like, even, if it makes sense. (Louise, P5-L148)

In the act of her mother also making goals with the team, responsibility for the problem is not entirely located in Louise. Vicky also reflected on a position that indicated a compromise between her desires and her mother's wishes,

I still go out, but like I go to safer places. (Vicky, P10-L283)

Many of the young people spoke about the intervention as bringing about change in either themselves, their parents or both that meant that their previously conflicted and volatile relationships became calmer and more open. In the interview with Jade, I asked her to put into words what she felt was the essence of the intervention. She said:

Helpful because I was able to speak, and let everything out.

R: What do you think your mum would say if I asked her the same question?

That she was able to speak without me there going rah rah [shouting noise]. (Jade, P14/L404)

Jade articulates her own need to speak, but also recognises her mother's need to speak. The reduction in conflict allowed them to shift their positions slightly, with

Jade being able to both hear, speak and see the situation from her own and her mother's perspective.

3.3.4 Summary

For some of the young people, talking and listening within their family was experienced as a difficult process. The meaning bestowed on the act of talking seemed to vary, while some found it challenging and frustrating, others found it isolating. Some of the young people described angry, violent relationships with their parents, with the risk of being excluded present and painful. For some, the intervention brought about changes in themselves and in how they experienced their parents. These changes allowed for some shifts in the position that the young people inhabited within the family and a reduction in the more difficult interactions as they found opportunities to return and attempt repair. For others, separating and embarking into the world on their own became the way in which maintaining a relationship became possible.

3.4 Them: The Experience of Professionals

This third super-ordinate theme (*Figure 5*) examines the relationships young people described with professionals.

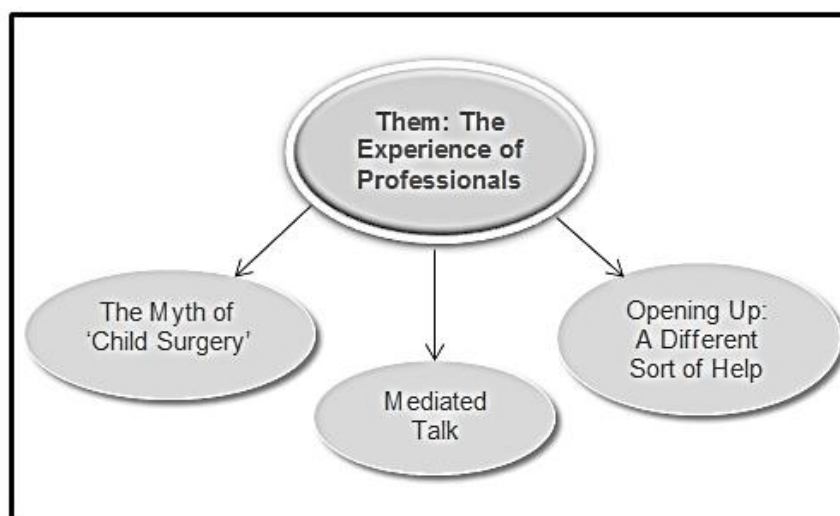


Figure 5: Them: The Experience of Professionals

3.4.1 The Myth of 'Child Surgery'

This theme captures the beliefs that some of the young people described about social services' removal of children from their families. This was described both as a myth and a reality. During Sam's interview he tried to describe what I believe was *child protection*, but became confused, resulting in him describing the process as 'child surgery'. I felt that this mistake revealed some of the fears connected to removal, in that surgery could connote an idea of being cut open or cut away from one's family.

It's child surgery, something like that? Not surgery, but like if they know your parent don't look after you well they take you away, something like that. (Sam, P6/L169)

Most of the young people referred to the belief held by them and their friends that social workers took children away from their families. For Madison it seems that this belief came from stories and experiences in her family.

My granddad said yeah, that they are bad yeah, that they don't do nothing to help yeah. So I was thinking at first yeah, 'ahh they are bad', but then I met my first social worker, and she was nice and I liked her, and then she weren't bad like she was just saying we don't want to take you away from your mum, we just want you to behave. (Madison, P19/L575)

Jade described divergent beliefs to those of Madison. It seems Jade's experiences have led her to hold a belief that social workers did intend to remove her from her family, she describes the negative way in which she experienced this.

They are not helping, just removing you from the situations and thinking it all going to be better, no it's not. (Jade, P13/L388)

Jade conveys the strong belief that attempts at removal from her family were not experienced as helpful, and that what she wanted was help to repair the relationship, not removal.

They just tried to get me away from them. That all it is. That is all it is with social workers. That's why I prefer [name of team], because it wasn't like that. They were actually helping, social workers just want to remove you, not help. Just [indicates brushing aside] sorted. No it's not. (Jade, P12/L367)

She favourably compares the approach of the family intervention with that of previous contacts with social services. It seems that something in the teams intervention felt more like 'help' for Jade, in comparison with her previous experience of attempted removal. The power of her feeling around this can be seen in her clear statements: 'No it's not'.

3.4.2 Mediated Talk

This subtheme has been given the title 'Mediated Talk' to describe the way in which a number of the young people spoke about how it was helpful when professionals mediated the act of talking. Below Jade describes her experience of this.

It was all round the table, we all sat there and spoke and then we was all able to say what we needed to say and get it off our chest in front of someone, so there was no arguments. (Jade, P3/L86)

The presence of someone other than the family seems to have helped Jade's family talk without arguing. She uses the phrase 'get it off our chest' indicated how the family felt able to unburden themselves and the relief that this may have brought. The family meetings enabled Jade to describe the painful position she experienced in her family.

R: Can you remember some of the things you said at the beginning?

P: Just about how I feel like I'm pushed out of the family, like I feel like the odd one out and then they was able to help with that and I was able to do stuff with my mum, my dad and my brother. (Jade, P4/L96)

Madison described the experience of mediation in a slightly different way. It seems that Madison found it helpful to tell staff how she felt and then for this to be relayed to her mother and then for her mother to approach her to talk. In Madison's experience, mediation looks more like staff taking the role of 'a middle man' to facilitate talk.

It was easier to tell them, and then they ask me if they would like them to feedback to mum. [...] So it was easier me telling them things and them telling Mum things, and then my mum coming up to me wanting to talk about things, than me telling my mum and wanting to talk about it (Madison, P2/L58)

Madison uses the word 'easier' twice, and this connects back with her earlier experiences of talking being hard. So there seems to have been some shift in her experience of the process. She continues to explain more about how the facilitation helped.

I could speak just to them on my own, then mum could speak to them on her own [...] Then they would put me and mum together. (Madison, P1-L22)

She emphasises the speaking alone for both her and her mother, and then the coming together. The word 'together' seems to come out powerfully in this context. Louise reflected on how she felt after the workers had visited.

I remember always after visits me and my mum would've made up, and I think they helped us make goals and stuff for the week. (Louise, P4/L116)

There is a sense of the team bringing about a window of opportunity in Louise and her mother's relationship that enabled them to reduce conflict enough to 'make up' and then set goals. Vicky also had a sense that what helped to reduce conflict in her family was talking and discussion. In this way, talking is considered to be an agent of repair. She said:

It got like solved through everyone talking and through discussion. (Vicky P5/L123)

Ayana describes feeling as though her mother initially wasn't talking with staff about what relations were like, but that as time went on Ayana felt this changed. She said:

I knew how things was. Then after that she started plain out speaking and then I was listening. (Ayana, P5/L142)

There is a definite sense that Ayana felt she knew how things were and that her mother wasn't revealing the full nature of the situation. There is also quite a powerful sense that Ayana sees her reality as 'truth', and that it took her mum to speak 'truthfully' in order for her to listen. Ayana reflects back on her relationship with her mum and how it didn't feel possible to talk without arguing.

Before we couldn't even speak to each other without arguing. If she was to ask me something I think I would put it in a nicer way than I would have before, she will probably speak to me in a nicer way. She will understand me. Yeah. Just talking, a lot to do with talking, the way we talk to each other. (Ayana, P12/L344)

Talking seems to be viewed as both the conduit for, and the symbol of, their relationship improving. Through the process of talking things become better, but

also talking becomes a way of representing the improvement in the situation. Towards the end of the interview, Ayana reflected on what she might say to other young people who were going to experience the intervention. She said:

I'd be like, at first it's not going to be easy, but it's going to help you in the long run, and it's going to be better. At first you're going to feel like, what is the point in being here, I'm not getting nothing out of it, but then a couple of months down. It helped a lot. It helped me. (Ayana, P14/429)

She describes the experience of a process, a process that at first was not easy but that eventually felt helpful. The young people seem to have found staff mediating talk between them and their parents helpful, and found that the presence of someone outside of the family reduced the potential for conflict, resulting in a greater sense of being heard and understood.

3.4.3 Opening up: A Different Sort of Help

Most of the young people spoke firstly about the practical and tangible support they received from staff, which was followed by the consolidation of a relationship signified by talking and listening. This appears to have helped to develop a greater sense of stability in their external environment, which then allowed them to examine their own experiences.

They offered me things to do, places to go, like a music project, or go to school for people who got kicked out of school [...] and like after school clubs [...] seeing how it is, in a working job. (Joe, P5/130)

Both Nadia and Sam spoke about some of the simple activities that seem to have helped them to connect with staff and subsequently talk. Here is Sam's example:

Like they would take us sometimes out and just like talk to us indoors, do some writing and things, do a poster and everything and talk. (Sam, P3/L90)

Joe acknowledged that the relationship didn't develop immediately, 'things go off to a rocky start, like we wasn't really talking, then gradually we just got like close friends' (P1/L15). Touchingly, Joe refers to staff as 'friends', and conveys a belief that talking to staff has helped him access something.

It's just what friends and people can do. If you talk to people, it shows what help there is out there. (Joe, P12/L354)

In talking with staff from the service it seems that Joe connects with something outside himself. Liam also refers to a staff member as 'more like a friend', and seems to experience the staff member as listening to him and talking about the challenges he was facing. The following passage appears to be an example of how talking, mediated by staff was considered by him to be something like a friendship.

She was more like a friend as well. She would just listen, listen, she would actually talk to me and stuff like when I got suspended, she would ask why and this and that. (Liam, P9/L271)

Talking in this way seems to lead to something good coming out of something difficult. Although things were still very difficult around him, he found that he could still reach out, connect and speak to someone, and so talking seems to become synonymous with building relationships. Liam's advice to other young people is as follows:

I'd tell them that it would help, that stop being angry, that after they wouldn't be as angry as much or even angry at all after it. They made me do things I didn't want to do but after I did enjoy it like. (Liam, P10/L292)

Jade describes her sense of how the structure of the intervention helped, and provided her with things she could do when conflict in her family arose.

They sat down and they made all different rules, and there was a big book like that [indicates book size], they had a big massive book, then on the walls we had what we was going to do like, if there was a situation, and then what starts a situation. So it was all in a bubble, and it was like, what to do if like my brother's annoying me, if my mum's annoying me and my dad, and we had all that, and it actually did help. (Jade, P1/L12)

It seems that there was also something significant in everyone having jobs to do. Again we see the way that some practical support and strategies start to help Jade to stabilise her relationships. On a number of occasions Jade mentioned the importance of everyone sitting around the table, which appears to have become synonymous with opening up and reconnecting.

Joe reflects back on where he felt he was in his past and his words connect with his early description of the alien position and his sense of being unseen and excluded from life.

Since I opened up like, a load of things to do, people to talk to, people who understand what I am going through. So it's like, they not, I'm not the odd one out in this world. (Joe, P17/L511)

The terminology around 'opening up' in this example is very interesting. Opening up seems to create a number of opportunities for him in that he feels this allows people to understand him and what he's going through. So it seems that talking to staff became an interaction that helped him to connect to others and also to become accepted by others. Through this, he has a sense that he is not the odd one out in the world, and realises that in sharing his experience he is not alone.

3.4.4 Summary

A fear that social workers remove children from their families was present for the young people. It seems that contact with professionals started to create new stories about help, but also in some cases confirmed existing beliefs that removal was a possibility. The young people seem to have found staff mediating talk between them and their parents helpful and found that the presence of someone outside of the family reduced the potential for conflict and resulted in a greater sense of being heard, feeling understood and connecting with others. They describe how connecting and talking with staff left them with an experience of themselves opening up to new and different opportunities. The act of talking and sharing seems to be a significant part of what felt like a helpful process. In this way it seems that they were able to find and negotiate new positions.

3.5 The Outside World

This super-ordinate theme (*Figure 6*) reflects the experiences the young people described in the wider contexts in which they lived.

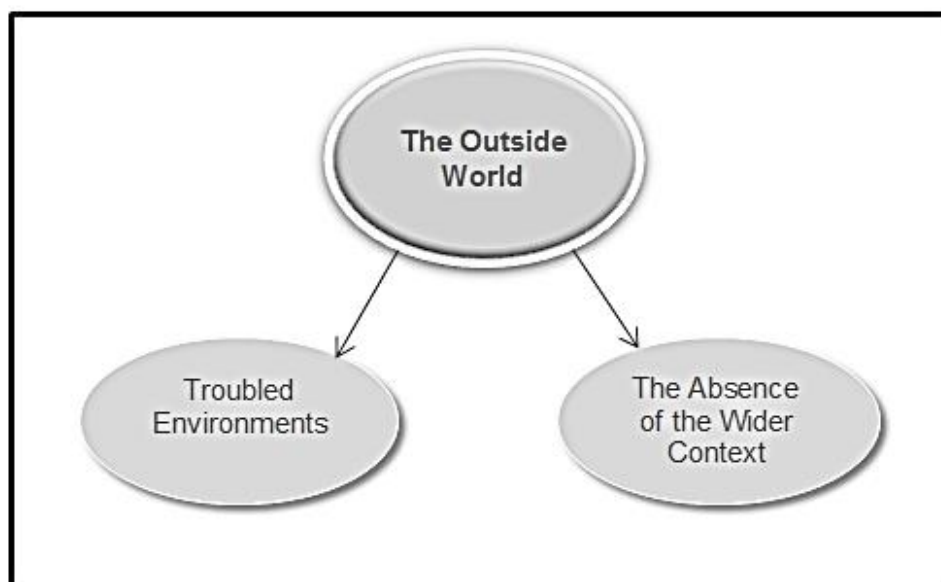


Figure 6: The Outside World

3.5.1 Troubled Environments

Some of the young people spoke about their experiences of the violent environments in which they live. For example, Vicky spoke about her knowledge of incidents in her community.

*Two boys went behind him and stabbed him in the back [....]
Everyone's got their own troubles [...] They all just want it their
own way. (Vicky, P14/L411)*

She makes sense of this incident by saying that it is an example of how everyone has their own troubles and there is something in her tone that normalises this incident. She talks later about how she has also got into fights herself, and that it was almost an inevitability that she would do this. Ayana also recounted her experience of her community:

*I get in trouble, being silly on the streets I guess, being bad.
(Ayana, P7/L191)*

After she had thought about what led her to do some of the things she said:

Just to get away from home. (Ayana, P9/L252)

Ayana being on the streets seems like a response strategy to her difficult family context. This again highlights the connected relationship between how the young people seemed to feel about themselves, their families and the outside world. In Louise's interview she talks about a belief that her behaviour symbolised 'people's worst nightmare', resonating with both the monster and alien metaphors.

*I think before I was probably sometimes people's worst
nightmare. Like I would just, not just me it was my friends as well.
Like we would just be towards society like idiots [...] We went to*

McDonalds and were just like torture the place. (Louise, P17/L512)

It seems that Louise at times existed in a place that rejected the world, but also in which the world may have rejected her, reflected in her experience of herself as a 'nightmare'. Joe described looking for things to do in his area and not finding anything. He appears to have made some attempts at engaging in positive activity until that became disrupted by his behaviour and feelings.

I looked around in my area for things to do and there was nothing there. And then I tried to join a football club and then, 'cause I was so angry at that time, I lost my anger and took it out on the football players and got angry with them. And then I looked around even closer and there was just the gang. They were going through the same things that I was going through at the time. (Joe, P3/L85)

Joe's entry into a gang seems to be connected with his home context, not being able to find things to do and the relationships between his own violence and the corresponding exclusion he experiences in different domains of his life.

Joe said that in the past he felt that he was viewed in particular ways by people in his community and gives this negative account of how he feels he's seen:

Out of control. Out of control or like messed up. (Joe, P13/L384)

It seems Joe feels quite powerfully a critical gaze from people around him. This contradicts to some extent his earlier feelings of being 'unseen'.

3.5.2 The Absence of the Wider Context

This theme captures the way in which the influence of wider contexts seemed least present, even at times absent, in the young people's accounts of their challenges and situations. In the interviews, the young people did comment on their wider environments, as we have seen in the previous theme. However, this

seems to be done in a particular way. When the young people describe themselves as being disruptive in the world, they describe their behaviour as mirroring the ways in which they feel they can be at home, or mirroring their feelings about themselves. Liam's understanding of himself being 'bad' everywhere is an example of this.

Some of the young people made fleeting references to the influence of wider contextual factors. For example, Ayana said:

P: It was hard for [her mother]. I'm not going to say it was easy or anything obviously.

R: Hard for her to talk?

P: Everything like, to raise seven kids, on your own and what not. (Ayana, P5/L144)

Although she acknowledges here that being a single parent to seven children is 'hard' for her mother, Ayana did not elaborate further on the ways in which this contextual factor may have contributed to the challenging relationship they face. Madison demonstrates a binary understanding of why some parents 'care' and some parents 'don't care'. She was keen for me to know that she felt her parents did care but that lots of other parents 'don't care'. She said:

Some parents yeah put up with it for a long time, and then they are just like, 'Do you know what? Do what you're doing, I don't care anymore'. And there are some parents that just don't care, that from when they were a baby they just don't care. (Madison, P4/L108)

Madison clearly expresses the view that some parents struggle. I encouraged her to clarify more about why she thought this may be, and she eventually said, 'They are like single mums, they don't work and stuff like that, and their mums just don't care' (Madison P5/L137). It seems that being a single mum and not being in work is part of her construction of parents who 'don't care'. I was left wondering about Madison's very strong either/or view of parenting, and wondering if this was close

to her own experience of being at the edge of her family, even though she was manifestly keen for me to know that her mum cared.

Joe reveals the dilemmas about how he has conceptualised the pressure of a 'wrong and right way', which to some extent reveals a broader societal view about certain types of behaviour.

Going the wrong way makes you feel noticed, but then going the right way takes a long time to get there and you feel that you are empty inside when you are doing the good thing, to when you are doing the bad thing you feel like you are getting somewhere in life but going the wrong way about it. There are consequences to what you do that's how I, that's what I have experienced. (Joe, P18/L543)

There seems to be a push and a pull between the 'right' path, a journey he sees as long and which leaves you feeling empty, and the 'wrong' path, that makes you feel like you're noticed and getting somewhere. It is almost as if this sense of right and wrong echoes a voice of societal judgement or morality. Later on in the interview, he uses the word 'controlled' to describe the way his family are now seen following the intervention.

*They just see us as a controlled and better family now.
(Joe, P14-L399)*

Joe seems to have a sense that being out of control is seen as 'messed up', while being controlled is seen as a good and better thing. This links with his sense of a right or wrong path, and how, by engaging with the intervention, he has found a 'better path', and is viewed by his community as more controlled.

In a London borough with extreme inequity between rich and poor, there was an absence in the young people's accounts about what influence this may have on their lives. Inequity may not be something they are overtly conscious of, or it may be that they see the disparity but don't see it as related to their own lives or

related to their own struggles. Whichever way this is interpreted, it seems important to notice both what is said and perhaps what is not.

Nadia and Chloe's interviews were the shortest, both expressing some confusion and lack of knowledge about the intervention and why the team was working with their families. For this reason their voices are least heard in the analysis, but they are not the least important. Although Nadia had very little to say about the intervention, her biggest experience was that the service had managed to get her and her family council housing. So although there did not seem to be a coherent sense of the work of the service, she did have a sense of the impact that better housing had had on her context.

What appeared striking in Chloe's interview was a sense of disconnect. Chloe answered 'I don't know' to most of the questions and prompts, and this could be formulated in a multitude of ways, some of which will be discussed in the following section.

I don't know. I don't even know what they [reference to the people in the team] are. (Chloe, P9/L258)

What was striking for me was the experience of a young person disconnected from their wider contexts, struggling to make sense of the world around them. I wondered if for some the intervention had not achieved an 'opening up' as Joe described – that some might remain in an alien/alienated position.

3.5.3 Summary

In some cases the young people have a belief that they engaged in illegal and violent behaviour in the community as an attempt to get away from home, and in response to the difficult feelings they held about their families. In this way illegal activity appears interconnected with their relationships at home.

Very few of the young people cited wider contextual factors as a way of understanding or explaining the situations they had found themselves in. They at

times touched on beliefs that there may be things that influence their position other than themselves and their families, but these were brief and oblique. They expressed a sense of themselves in their communities, but this seemed to mirror a more internalised way of understanding the problem. In the spirit of trying to understand these young people's experiences it seems important to think about and interpret what was said, but also what was absent. This will be considered more fully in the following section.

4. DISCUSSION

This chapter will examine how the findings address the research questions and how they relate to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks. The implications of the study for clinical practice and further research will then be examined.

4.1 Addressing the Research Questions

The themes reflect the way in which both systemic and ecological frameworks formulate the structures that are said to influence child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). This has been echoed in the formation of the themes, in part because the researcher saw this as a helpful way in which to conceptualise the different domains in the young people's lives, but also because the young people themselves had a sense of their experiences in these different spheres.

4.1.1 How do Young People Make Sense of Themselves and Their Contact with Intensive Family Interventions?

Young people's accounts indicate that they hold both internal and, at times, relational problem explanations for their contact with the service.

4.1.1.1 Internalised Problem Explanation

The young people used a number of problem saturated metaphors (White, 1995) to describe themselves and their behaviour. They described family environments characterised by angry and violent interactions, in which they felt their behaviour was 'monster' like. Within their troubled microsystem relationships it was possible to see how the 'alien' and 'monster' perceptions of themselves could have developed and become internalised (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Systemic frameworks have for some time been interested in the damaging effects of combining problem stories with internal identities (Bateson, 1972; Tomm, 1988;

White, 1988). It is argued that the more the problem becomes connected to the person, the harder it can be to find alternative identities (Tomm, 1989). It seems that these experiences may have left some of the young people with a pervasive feeling of anger about 'everything' in their life. Drawing on anger was also seen as something useful as it facilitates a feeling of getting somewhere in the stark context of being excluded from many domains of their lives.

Young people described feeling powerful, and gave examples of not being able to hear the word 'no', reacting very strongly to the setting of limits, and how at their most challenging they felt 'big'. Lemma (2010) suggests experiences of trauma and marginalisation can enhance this need to feel powerful and in control. She argues that trauma can disrupt a healthy growing confidence in oneself as effective, and thus this can enhance an omnipotent defence. Indeed, within the descriptions of the powerful and angry-self there was the sense of young people at their most out of control, unsafe and exposed. In the context of Winnicott's (1956) theory of the anti-social tendency, this acting out of powerful urges is said to be a sign of a child striving for boundaries and containment. However, in the case of these young people, their acts of anger seemed to alienate them further from their family and social networks. Waddell (2002) suggests that the development of a powerful self in adolescence can be a way of evading some of the anxiety that these young people may feel about other parts of their lives, such as their feelings of rejection, or the, at times, painful relationships they have with their parents.

The alien metaphor described a disconnect between how Joe felt and the world outside, leaving him feeling unseen. Fonagy and Bateman (2006, p.11) describe a position they call the 'alien self' in relation to attachment theory. They argue that in the early child and parent relationship a child should develop a representation of their own experiences through mentalization processes such as mirroring. However, if this is hampered in some way, the child is unable to differentiate between their own needs and those of the caregiver. Fonagy and Bateman (2006) argue that the effect of this can be that the child internalises the image of the caregiver within their own self-image, thus forming the 'alien self'. It is argued that to reduce this internal incoherence there can be an increase in

more externalised behaviour, much as Joe described the violent incidents that brought him into contact with services. In the context of thinking about both internal and external processes, it seems that Joe might be articulating something of an unsettled internal world that feels somehow incoherent and confusing. It is important to note that Joe's use of the term 'alien' could be made sense of using a number of theories and that the researcher approaches this theoretical exploration with curiosity but not certainty.

These ideas generate a number of questions in regard to the relationship between the powerful self and the feeling of oneself as a monster or alien. Some young people spoke about the monster position having the function of making them feel more powerful, yet at the same time one could argue that the omnipotent defence might come in response to the feelings of the internal alien. How this complicated relationship functions is difficult to assess, but what is significant is that there appears to be a relationship. For it is within this relationship and the ways it is manifested that we may start to understand and look beyond the powerful and aggressive presentation that these young people can display, and start to see more of their psychological experience and the very painful aspects of an internalised problem identity and, crucially, what needs are being expressed in this presentation.

4.1.1.2 Relational Problem Explanation

Alongside the strong internal problem story there also appeared to be an understanding that the intervention was required because of the problems that existed between the young people and their families. The theme 'Us: the Experience of My Family' reveals how young people made sense of the problem relationally; indeed, to feel like an alien and monster is also a metaphor for how you feel in relation to others. In this respect it seems that the young people had at times very fluid perceptions of the problem being internal to them whilst also existing within the relationship between them and their families. In many respects this, in fact, captures the complicated dynamics between attachment and identity development, in that theoretically they are symbiotic.

It seems that for these young people the family context had perhaps ceased to function as a source of containment at times of disturbed emotional states (Bowlby, 1973). Perhaps the experience of feeling pushed out and rejected that some of the young people described is the consequence of a family base that is not able to contain or control (Dallos, 2013). Some of the young people described confused relationships in which they felt unsure about their parent's intentions and a feeling of mistrust. Both Erikson (1968) and Bowlby (1973) saw trust as a central element in the adolescent's ability to negotiate the transition into adulthood. It seems plausible to suggest that a feeling of mistrust towards a parent may affect one's sense of self-worth (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005). Indeed Bowlby (1973, p. 359) writes:

'Human beings of all ages are found to be at their happiest and to be able to deploy their talents to best advantage when they are confident that, standing behind them, there are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise'

It is important to state that the researcher is attempting to examine ideas in a tentative way in order not to direct blame at parents. This study accounts for one perspective, as parents were not interviewed about the challenges they have faced in parenting these young people. This raises an important question about the line between blame and non-blame (Dallos, 2013). Dallos (2013) argues that in thinking about attachment relationships it is important to take account for the ways in which context and trans-generational issues can affect parenting. This will be discussed in the following sections.

It is also helpful to understand the young people's experiences in line with a family life-cycle perspective, in which it is not the adolescent's behaviour *per se* that is seen as the problem, but the meaning that is bestowed on the behaviour by the system around them (Preto, 1989). In some sense, the young people saw themselves being rejected by their families because of their monster-like presentation, but at the same time they also seem to feel monster-like in the context of their conflicted relationships. Bronfenbrenner (1977) might interpret

this systemic structure as impoverished in the following way: the family system characterised by conflict and violence is likely to correspond with other microsystems characterised in the same way. Indeed, the young people had a blanket perception of themselves as 'bad' everywhere, and implied that they faced similar challenges in most microsystem domains. In turn, the mesosystem relationships are experienced as disjointed and hostile, as poor relationships between school, home, community and the young person develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It seems theoretically plausible that the young people could develop a highly internalised perception of themselves as the problem, but at the same time also experience the problem as situated in the disjointed and hostile relationships around them. In this sense, the internalised and relational problem narratives are very much interconnected.

Overall it seems that the young people saw the problem as both internal to them and existing in the context of their immediate relationships. In this respect, the whole family, ecological approach that family interventions employ appears to have fitted well with young people's explanatory models of the problem. This is supported by the research by Tighe *et al.* (2012), which identified that the whole family approach in an MST intervention seemed to fit with the young people's sense of what they needed.

4.1.2 How do Young People Make Sense of Some of the Changes that can Take Place in the Systems that they Inhabit?

Young people described changes and transitions in themselves, the ways their families functioned, and the ways in which they experienced their more immediate communities.

4.1.2.1 *Experiences of a Changing Parent*

Most of the participants started by describing vivid accounts of their difficult family relationships, but also expressed a sense of their longing for better relationships. Some spoke about feeling as if they were pushed out of the family, at times feeling as though they did not have a parent, or, at the most extreme, had 'lost' a

mother. They then went on to describe the ways in which their relationships had changed. For example, they spoke about experiencing a calmer parent who did not shout as much, a parent who began to spend time with them, and who was able to listen to their needs. It seems this led them to feel they were beginning to rebuild the relationship. For example, Madison's mother not reacting to her attempts at aggression seems to have given Madison the opportunity to respond in a different way (Winnicott, 1956). This is an interesting example of a young person's perception of a parent attempting a new strategy. This is just one side of this relational interaction, but gives some insight into the young person's experience of a parent making changes in the way they respond and attend to the needs of a young person.

Other young people gave simple but significant examples of the relationship changing, such as their parent sitting with them, spending time with them, helping them with the things they needed. Some spoke about how the intervention's use of goals left them feeling that responsibility was being shared and that everyone was taking part in making things better. For those who experienced changes in their parent, it seems that it allowed for some shifts from the problem saturated position which they inhabited within the family, to something more hopeful (Tomm, 1989).

Reduction in arguing and shouting meant that young people saw more opportunities to return and attempt elements of repair of the relationship. Furthermore, the experience of a parent 'opening up' to them seems to have allowed them to move from a place in which they felt pushed out to a place that was more central and safe. A number of the young people noted the subsequent impact that a better relationship with their parent had on their relationship with their siblings, further diminishing feelings of being 'pushed out'. These ideas are supported in the Tighe *et al.* (2012) findings, which show that positive behaviour change is more consistently maintained when greater emphasis is placed on the quality of the parent-child relationship.

4.1.2.2 Changes in the Experience of Talking

The young people in this study described a spectrum of challenges, ranging from difficulty in everyday communication to extreme, hostile arguments. This seems to have contributed to the perception of themselves as signalling trouble; describing how their return home often triggered angry altercations. The team's input around family discussions for most of the young people appears to have brought about positive changes in the way talking then took place. The presence of staff meant that the young people felt able to have discussions with their parents that did not result in arguments. Interestingly, the Tighe *et al.* (2012) research suggests that a key element in the change process was that young people's participation in open, whole family meetings led them to have a better understanding of the effect of their behaviour on other family members. However, in this research the family meetings seemed to serve a slightly different function. The young people in this study spoke about the meetings as a chance for everyone to 'unburden', and for the whole family to listen and hear without the presence of conflict. It may well be possible that within the listening and understanding the young people saw the impact of their behaviour, but it was the act of talking without conflict that appeared most significant to the researcher. It seemed that being able to talk without conflict led young people to start to be able to negotiate a slightly different, less problematized position within their families (White, 1988).

4.1.2.3 Separation

Some young people spoke about moving out being a path they had to negotiate in order to maintain a relationship with their family. Jade, Liam and Courtney all now live in supported housing. Although this is not the outcome the service works towards, it was described as a preferable outcome for these young people. This separation of the adolescent from the family is interesting to consider in relation to Erikson's (1977) ideas about identity formation. Could it be that their presence at home was not allowing these young people to try out different identities in a way that Erikson (1977) would argue was important in moving towards a more adulthood? As we have seen, their internalised problem identities at home may

have been enough to force them to want to separate in order try out different roles. However, as Erikson (1977, p.156) writes:

“any experimentation with identity images means also to play with the inner fire of emotions and drives and to risk the outer danger of ending up in a social ‘pocket’ from which there is no return”.

Indeed, playing with the ‘inner fire’ seemed to connect with a fear of total rupture from their families, a fear of ‘no return’. This might explain why it appeared important that even in their separation they were able to maintain a relationship with their families. In the minds of some of the young people, separation seemed to be understood as a way of retaining their family connections. It is interesting to consider if this separation constitutes the acting out of the powerful self, or if this is the act of an adolescent understanding the limits of their context and finding ways to minimise conflict and find alternative, more hopeful opportunities.

What seemed significant is that the young people felt supported by the intervention to negotiate a connected separation, finding ways to separate without it being symbolic of total rupture. Jade particularly spoke about how important the work prior to her leaving was in strengthening family communication enough so that when she did move out it wasn’t the end. In fact it seemed to be the beginning of a better relationship.

4.1.3 In What Ways do Young People Feel they are Viewed by Intervening Agencies and How do They, in Turn, View Those Agencies?

4.1.3.1 The Myths and Stories

The theme the ‘Myth of ‘child surgery’” captures a belief held by the young people that social services often remove children from their families. This particular script appears to have been constructed through a combination of influences (Byng-Hall, 1988; Reder & Fredman, 1996). Some young people described family stories about children’s actual removal and stories about the inadequacy of previous experiences of help. Within Reder and Fredman’s (1996)

conceptualisation this would be an example of other contexts influencing young people's 'relationship to help'. For others, their beliefs seemed to have been formed from their own direct experience and actual threat of removal.

Although the story of removal was very present, many of the young people also had positive experiences of professionals in their lives, and so seemed to hold a complicated mix of beliefs. Contact with the service appeared to have given some of the young people a stronger sense of a positive relationship to help. A number of them were very aware of the removal script, but said that in their experience they did not feel that this was the intervention's intention. For Jade, the Intensive Family Intervention was described as her first real experience of help. She described threats of removal without improvements in the relationship as a very painful experience.

In Lemma's (2010) analysis, the young people at Kids Company indicated intense feelings of shame in seeking help. It is interesting to note that in this research the young people did not appear to experience shame in the same way. For some young people they described 'being at rock bottom', with the offer of the intervention providing some sign of hope. However, it is important to note the slow way in which these young people developed a relationship with staff that began to feel helpful. The ways in which young people described this process will be explored in the following section.

4.1.3.2 The Impact of Practical Support

Most of the young people spoke first about the practical and tangible support they received from the intervention: with activities, support with conflicts with other agencies, changes in their housing, and access to their communities. This seemed to be followed by the consolidation of a relationship signified by talking and listening. This appears to have helped develop a greater sense of stability in the external environment which then allowed them to examine their own internal experiences. In Lemma's (2012) analysis, the term 'titrating intimacy' is used to describe the process by which young people appeared to use the Kids Company building as a way to start feeling safe and contained in order to then start to

consider developing intimate relationships with key workers (Lemma, 2010). In this research, young people did not necessarily use a building or a physical space to begin to feel more trusting, but they seemed to experience a similar process when receiving practical support. For example, the experience of being helped to talk without conflict appeared to be a significant part of how the young people developed a belief that the intervention was helpful. Young people described either talking with staff, or talking with the family facilitated by staff to minimise conflict. For the young people, these incidents of mediated talk became concrete examples of their situations changing. They noted the experience of it happening in their home, around the 'kitchen table', and it seemed as though this felt like help coming to them and coming into the system in which they saw the problem existing, providing a very real sense of developing some stability in their external environments.

4.1.3.3 Situating the Intervention in Wider Contexts

Boyle (2011) convincingly argues that in theory, research and practice, psychology has downplayed the role of toxic contexts as a cause of distress. The effect of such construction is that distress is viewed as internal to people and illustrative of underlying deficiency. Boyle (2012) illustrates this process using the example of the 'stress vulnerability model', where difficult contexts become viewed as secondary to an underlying pathology. This theoretical deconstruction provides some interesting ideas with which to consider the ways in which young people in this study spoke about the environments and contexts beyond themselves and their families.

There was some acknowledgement of the, at times, violent communities in which these young people live. Some young people described spending more time on the streets as a way of not being at home. Joe described looking in his area for things to do, and the negative cycle of being excluded from a football club and eventually finding connections with a gang. However, it is interesting to note that instead of explaining his entry into the gang through his context, he drew more on the internalised problem narrative that his own violence meant he was excluded from more positive activities. Although the young people's challenging

environments were mentioned, it seemed that young people saw themselves as 'bad' within those contexts, as opposed to seeing certain environments as challenging and at times toxic to exist in. The theme 'The absence of the wider context' interprets what the researcher felt was a lack of recognition on the part of the young people that their wider systems could influence their situations and their need for intensive support. On a few occasions, the young people cited their parents being single or there being limited opportunities locally, but these explanations did not appear to form a significant part of how they made sense of their situations. In a London Borough of extreme inequity and imbalance of opportunity, this absence of context appeared worth noting.

The introduction examined the ways in which legislative moves have influenced an ever-shifting focus on family responsibility versus the state's role in supporting families. Critical commentary has suggested that a discourse of deficit (Gergen, 1997) has developed that focuses on parenting and individual deficiency as opposed to seeing contextual constraints such as poverty as significant limiters to parenting, opportunities and positive outcomes (Parr, 2009). This discourse reflects the way in which the young people in this study described their problems, for they had internalised problem beliefs about themselves and about their families, and did not appear to situate their troubles in wider contexts.

The last twenty years of legislation, which has minimised the role of contextual constraints and emphasised individual and family deficiency, may well have some relationship with how these young people now make sense of their situations (Parr, 2011). Bronfenbrenner (1977) would suggest that the way in which macrosystem legislation filters down into an individual's experience is hard to pinpoint and even harder to prove. However, he would also argue that influences such as key legislative developments have such a powerful effect over the sub-structures below, that their influences are almost unconscious. In using the privileged position of an academic researcher, I am able to make these theoretical connections, and in the spirit of making sense of these young people's experiences, it seems important to make these links. In doing so, I attempt to bring the unconscious to the conscious, and to begin to expose some of the

hidden influences of power that may play a role in how these young people make sense of the challenges that they face.

4.2 Implications and Recommendations for Clinical Practice

The themes were presented to the team who work with these young people. The following points are the ways in which they discussed how this research would be helpful to their work and to our understanding of Intensive Family Interventions more broadly.

4.2.1 Implications for Working with the Young People

4.2.1.1 Implications for Formulation

The team suggested that often a more externalised presentation can hide or distract from the more painful experiences and beliefs the young people might hold about themselves. We therefore discussed how the results might be applied to the process of psychological formulation, especially in the interpretation of anti-social and challenging behaviour as indicative of a problematised internal identity. We thought together about how it might be possible to be more mindful of and attempt to ameliorate the more alien, monster parts of young people. These ideas included ways in which they might disconfirm and work against the problem saturated beliefs, by attending more to exceptions and strengths within the young people's stories (White & Epston, 1990).

Powerful adolescents are often hard to relate to, they can be frightening, feel chaotic, and leave professionals feeling deskilled (Crouch, 2011). There appears to be some utility in viewing this behaviour as a gesture of need, and, as Winnicott (1956) argued, as a gesture of hope. This psychoanalytically informed interpretation provides an account of the most difficult behaviour that connects more with an unmet need than a story about deficiency. These ideas therefore appear helpful in rethinking and formulating both the behaviour and how professionals might respond to it.

In opening up conversations about meaning, we also start to be able to examine the defences that staff teams can use against the powerful anxiety and emotionally painful aspects of this work. Indeed Crouch (2011) argues that fear, guilt and uncertainty are all powerful defences that staff teams can experience in response to working with these young people and families. Opportunities can arise when we start to view expressions of chaos and hostility as simultaneously signs of hope as well as of something more painful. This can be a useful way in which staff teams can examine their own feelings of fear, chaos and confusion, and make sense of the guilt they might feel when there appears to be no hope.

4.2.1.2 Importance of Talk

The team found the ways in which young people spoke about the significance of talking in its different forms reassuring and hopeful. The theme ‘Mediated Talk’ confirmed to the team that young people did find talking and being helped to talk beneficial. They also felt that this finding countered a very prevalent discourse that these young people do not want to engage and do not want to talk. The team felt that the ways in which talking appeared such a central part of the young people’s experience would help the staff to find more ways of supporting that process overtly, and reminded staff that the talking that takes place has a purpose and is experienced in that way by most of the young people.

4.2.2 Implications for work with Parents

The themes raised some interesting implications around the balance between using more behavioural techniques versus using more relational, mentalization-focused (Bevington & Fuggle, 2013) approaches to the work. Within mentalization-based approaches, there is a commitment to reducing conflict in order to facilitate thinking, thus creating a capacity to hold others in mind (Bevington & Fuggle, 2013). The team described a current dilemma they have had around a move towards mentalization approaches, and whether this had subsequently had a negative effect in focusing less on the more classically

behavioural techniques such as contracts, reward and consequence (Sanders, 1999).

Young people appeared to place significance on their experience of conflict reduction in order for them to start talking, sharing and subsequently repairing their relationships. The findings of this research seemed to support the team's move towards a more mentalization-based approach in which the aim is to reduce conflict and anxiety in order to understand each other's positions within the family. The team also discussed the need to achieve a balance between restoring the parent to a more authoritative position through the use of consistent behavioural strategies and facilitating a relationship signified by thoughtful communication.

4.2.3 Implications for Professionals

4.2.3.1 Supporting Connected Separations

The team discussed how it can be hard for workers when the option of the young person living at home is no longer possible. This research indicates that in some contexts separation may become necessary for some young people. It seems that Intensive Family Interventions play an important role in helping young people in these contexts to make a connected separation. The team felt that although this was something they knew in their clinical experience, it was also important to hear it coming from the young people. They felt that it gave them more of a framework within which to think about separation and how important their role might be in helping young people negotiate this key family life-cycle transition (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

4.2.3.2 Applying Relationship to Help Ideas

The team discussed the ways in which it was important to understand these young people's relationships to help. The presence of the scripts around social workers removing children highlighted to the team the importance of making their intentions explicit. They considered the ways in which this may need to be done

at regular intervals throughout the intervention and at different stages with as much authenticity and transparency as possible. The team also thought there was space in their work to consider both their own personal relationships to help, and how understanding this may be important when engaging with particularly hard to reach families (Fredman, 2007).

4.2.3.3 Contextualising Problems

The team spoke about how interesting they found the themes around the presence and absence of wider contexts. A number of the practitioners spoke about difficulties with knowing how to bring context more into the conversation they had with families. We discussed the power of media representations and if and how there might be ways of countering this pervasive influence. The team had a number of ideas about how contextual constraints might be made more explicit in early stages of formulation. Although the team feel they often do work to change structural issues such as housing, they felt there was still more that could be done to try to contextualise with families some of the challenges they face.

4.2.4 Implications for Policy Makers

Many of the clinical implications discussed above are relevant to policy makers, as they reveal the dilemmas and challenges that staff teams face in attempting to support families. The findings of the research provide policy makers with perspectives on what it might be like to be a young person who receives Intensive Family Interventions. Currently in the UK, new services are being created under the funding of the Troubled Families Agenda. But there is much work to be done in thinking about how policies support families with practical, social and psychological support, whilst also acknowledging contextual constraints. Policy makers have the responsibility to consider the ways in which these families are constructed by legislation, including the ways in which language is used to support particular agendas. Indeed, terminology such as 'troubled' serves only to perpetuate problematized ways of seeing these young people and families. It is also worth noting that policy makers have their own agendas, which

might include the problematisation of young people and families precisely in order to disguise the effects of the contextual factors which powerful agents perpetuate.

4.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Important insights can be arrived at through the use of qualitative research to access the experiences of marginalised groups of young people. This research indicates that these young people have much to say and are willing to speak when given the opportunity. This study has looked at one perspective, but further research may hope to explore the multiple perspectives of people involved in this intervention, such as siblings, parents and professionals, and the different ways in which they make sense of their contact with the service.

This research has relied on semi-structured interviews to access experiences. However, the author recognises that there could be more creative and innovative ways in which to engage young people in the process of research. Developments in participatory methods have shown how using media resources and modern technology could all help to create interesting ways in which young people might work towards capturing their experiences for themselves (Ansell, Robson, Hajdu, & Van Blerk, 2012). These might be interesting avenues to explore in further research.

4.4 Assessment of Quality and Methodological issues

Smith (2011) has published specific criteria on the assessment of quality in IPA research, which were influenced by the more generic criteria developed by Yardley (2000) and Elliot, Fischer, and Rennie (1999). The following section will use Smith's (2011) criteria in the critical assessment of this research, and will also incorporate methodological criticisms as and when they correspond to each of the criteria.

4.4.1 Smith (2011) Quality Criteria in IPA Research

4.4.1.1 *The Paper Should Have a Clear Focus*

Smith (2011) suggests that IPA papers that examine a specific phenomenon are more likely to be of a higher quality. The focus of this paper has been on a particular group of young people and how they make sense of themselves and their contact with an Intensive Family Intervention. Family intervention models are a somewhat nebulous collection of services that have slightly different aims and emphases. Thus, caution must be exercised in attempting to generalise the findings to similar services. But although the *nuts and bolts* of different family interventions may be very different, there is much documented in this research about marginalised young people's experience of a particular style of intervention that might help to understand how similar interventions affect the young people they engage with.

4.4.1.2 *The Paper Will Have Strong Data*

Smith (2011) argues that getting good quality data is down to conducting a 'good' interview. However, experience of this research suggests that the relationship between 'good' data and a 'good' interview could be more complicated. Following the same interview schedule and a similar style and manner of interviewing, the ten young people generated different amounts and types of data. For example, some of the young people who spoke for longer generated more content, but some of the shortest interviews held extremely rich sections in which the young people were able to describe their experiences in a full and straightforward way.

The interviews were all conducted in different locations, in line with the recommendation of the young person who took part in the consultation stage. A dynamic of 'teacher' and 'pupil' was present, in the two interviews conducted at school, which could have led the young people to feel that they needed to answer the questions 'correctly', or not say anything critical. The sounds and systems of the school were all around us, making this layer of context feel very present. In contrast, the interviews conducted in parks felt more relaxed, and the young

people seemed more open to thinking about the feelings connected to events in their lives. The more open, neutral environment of a park, not laden with the context of clinic or school, may have provided more of a free space in which to think. Having said this, an interview conducted in the social services building – a context that might well have a number of connotations for the young person – was one of the fullest, and did not appear to affect this young person's ability to make connections and think about experience.

The beliefs that the young people have about help could also have influenced the impact that particular locations had on interviews. Likewise, young people's relationship to help is likely to have had a significant impact on the beliefs they held about me, as a trainee psychologist and a professional.

All of these factors could have played some role in influencing the outcome of the data. So although I employed, to the best of my abilities, my appreciation of context, skills in building rapport and clinical interviewing, as well as drawing on my experience working with this group of young people, I also acknowledge that the young person brings with them beliefs and understandings about me, the process, and help, that all contribute to the way in which they speak. Thus the formula 'good' interview equals 'good' data appears to overlook some important factors present in this research.

IPA research relies predominantly on conducting semi-structured interviews. Although this method has its benefits, it must also be acknowledged that language only reveals part of experience, and is constituted and mediated through multiple lenses and contexts (Harper, 2013). Although I have employed reflexive methods, and thought carefully about the interviews and the questions I have asked, I still brought my own world view to the interaction. Likewise, it would be naïve to assume that these young people told me the full extent of their experience. I have undoubtedly heard only a small fraction of their beliefs and ideas in the short time in which they spoke to me. We can take much from interviews, but it is important to acknowledge their limits, and thus the limits to how far we can extend or generate conclusions.

A number of young people who were approached did not want to participate or did not respond to staff invitations or letters. It is likely that the young people who did agree to participate were more engaged in the service. It is possible that those who did not wish to participate – and so whose experiences and beliefs are not present in the research – held more negative views about their experience, and professionals more widely.

It is important to consider the influence that the participants gender had on the findings of this research. According to the team in which the research was conducted, their client group is normally evenly split between males and females. 7 out of the 10 participants in this study were female, which may reflect the services demographic at the time the research was being conducted or could suggest something about gender differences. It is commonly argued that male adolescents are more antisocial than their female counterparts (Moffitt, 2001). This argument tends to focus on beliefs that males typically present with more externalised troubled behaviour while females tend to internalise difficult feelings and so present more with low mood or anxiety. The females in this sample did not appear to experience this particular pattern, with many talking about the at times angry and violent interactions they became involved in. Perhaps more females responded to the invitation to participate because of the types of relationships they may have had with their workers or due to beliefs they had about talking. Stereotypically females are said to be more open to talking and so beliefs about the value of talk may have influenced their interest in the study. The gender imbalances in this study it worth noting and holding in mind when thinking about the findings. Perhaps the higher proportion of females in the sample influenced the importance young people placed on talking and thus the presence of talk in the themes. Although without more of a thorough investigation into gender differences and beliefs about gender, it is hard to make any strong assertions about this influence. An examination of the influence of gender within this particular population would be an interesting area of further research.

4.4.1.3 The Paper Should be Rigorous

In Smith's (2011) criteria, 'rigour' refers to both the reader having a sense of the prevalence of a theme and participants across the sample being well represented

for each theme. Smith (2011) suggests that in research with larger samples, illustrations from at least three or four participants should be included per theme. Within the limits of space, I have attempted to be consistent with this recommendation. The prevalence of the themes across all participants can be seen in Appendix O. This is also reflected in my selection of different young people's accounts per theme, and in the way in which I have weaved their views together to build the narrative.

In general, eight participants are represented throughout all of the main themes. As discussed in the results section, two young people in the sample – Nadia and Chloe – are not represented in the majority of the themes. Nadia was 12, and so younger than the other participants, and the interview with her was conducted in school, so both age and location may have impacted on the outcome of this interview. However, Chloe was 16 and the interview was conducted at home. Chloe answered, 'I don't know' to nearly all of the questions, and I felt as though she didn't want to participate, even though she had agreed to and had met with me. She also genuinely did not seem to have a sense of what the intervention aimed to achieve, so seemed to find talking about the process perplexing. Taking into consideration these contextual factors, I have discussed in the results section that this could be interpreted as a disconnect between Chloe and the intervention happening around her. I have touched on what that might mean for her, the outcomes of the work, and clinical implications for the team. In this way I hope that Chloe is still present in her absence, as she represents an important example of a young person not engaged in and not aware of the intervention around her. Perhaps Chloe represents some of the young people that did not respond to my request for an interview.

Methods such as credibility checks (Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999), used in other qualitative approaches to achieve a rigorous process, are said not to be appropriate when using IPA (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). This argument is based on the premise that the researcher who has conducted the research and performed the analysis has entered into understanding participants' accounts using an in-depth process, and made interpretations from that position. Interpretations are therefore owned by the researcher who will have made efforts

to bracket off their own beliefs in order to understand the participants' positions. An outsider, cross-checking or in some way 'validating' these interpretations would be incongruent with IPA's epistemology (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Instead, rigour and commitment are meant to come from the reflexive process employed throughout. I have attempted to consistently employ rigorous, reflexive strategies to ensure I am aware of the ways in which the interpretations have been influenced by my own beliefs rather than from the material in the data. Ultimately, the results will always be a combination of both those influences, and it would be false to claim otherwise. However, keeping a reflexive journal, presenting at the London Regional IPA group, attending a peer reflexive group, and seeking regular academic supervision and input from the service has meant that my thinking and development of ideas has been crossed-checked and appraised as I have moved through the process.

4.4.1.4 The Analysis Should be Interpretative not Just Descriptive

Using Smith *et al.*'s (2009) three stages of interpretation as a guide, I have attempted to move beyond description by drawing on theoretical and clinical knowledge. Each quote is discussed and an interpretation made about the meaning being made sense of by the participants. The aim has been to achieve a conceptual understanding of the data that has questioned and interrogated the meaning but in a way that still comes from the data (Smith *et al.* 2009). Clinical Psychology Training placed me in a good position to make higher level conceptual interpretations, as the process felt similar to that of conducting therapy and helping people to think about higher level meanings. I also felt able to access a wide range of theoretical avenues with which to make sense of the findings as a result of the breadth of approaches I have been given access to in my training. However, I have been hesitant to draw on too many theoretical frameworks for fear of excessive pluralism that might lead to a lack of depth in my thinking.

4.4.1.5 The Analysis Should be Pointing to Both Convergence and Divergence

Within each theme I have attempted to discuss the convergence and divergence of the participants' opinions, and illustrate the subtle differences of experiences within the same conceptual area. For example, 'Me: The Experience of Myself' contains the three most dominate conceptualisations, but I have also spoken within those themes about the connections between those experiences and the similarities and differences between one part of an experience and the next. I also designed the theme table in a way intended to show the interconnected nature of experience.

4.4.1.6 *The Paper Needs to be Carefully Written*

From the outset I have attempted to remain careful and thoughtful in doing this research. I have tried to remain aware of my relationship with the team and the motivation in some ways to please them. I have also held central to the process my own desire to produce a piece of work that felt authentic to the young people's stories. I spent some time thinking about the structure of the theme formation and used a number of different reflective spaces to think about different ways one might conceptualise the information. These processes have all helped to create a piece of work that has been thoughtfully developed and executed.

4.4.1.7 *Choice of Analysis*

Learning about IPA through applying it has been an interesting experience. I have at times worried that its emphasis on interpretation permits the researcher to stretch the data too far. For example, I feel the first round of super-ordinate theme titles were too far from the young people's accounts, meaning that I had to return to the data and think again about the formation. This has been a creative process that has allowed the exploration of different ideas with an emphasis on being reflexive. In this sense IPA has been sufficient in achieving the aims of this research and in providing a method with which to examine experience. As discussed above, further research might consider more innovative ways of capturing experience as told by young people themselves.

4.4.2 Personal Reflections and Closing Thoughts

I was thankful and touched to hear the often painful yet hopeful stories of these young people. This project has left me feeling committed to working with marginalised groups of young people that feel alienated from opportunities. It reminds me of the responsibility I hold to use the opportunities I have been given in my training and education to highlight their experiences and the ways in which they feel they can be helped by services. Young people and children who are grouped in certain ways and who are at the receiving end of interventions should be given opportunities to talk about their experiences. I have been reminded of the power of theory, and how important it is to attempt to understand distress and challenge at all levels, from the individual to the relational and the contextual.

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6 APPENDICES

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Appendix A: Extract from Peer Reflexive Group

QUESTION: Why did you pick this project?

RESEARCHER: I worked for two years in this service. So when faced with the task of picking something to research for my doctorate thesis there were a number of practical reasons why it made sense to return to them. I knew that they might help me access the team and the young people. The next layer of it was that was that I loved working in the team and I loved the work. Working in the team was quite a pivotal point in my career, where I felt I had really started to get to a point where I was doing psychology seriously. The work felt very edgy and innovative at the time and interesting and it really fitted with me. It was very appealing work with marginalised, out there young people who I feel are viewed in particular ways and thought to present a particular problem. So all in all going back to do this research felt very exciting.

QUESTION: Why the young people, why not the parents or professionals?

RESEARCHER: My anecdotal experience was that young people weren't often asked how they made sense of the intervention and the presence of this large team in their lives. I had done a lot of service evaluation with the parents already. Most of the intervention is very parent focus and all the standard measures are completed about the young people. I thought that there might be an interesting gap in the literature about young people's thoughts on this type of intervention.

QUESTION: Do you have any beliefs about what you would like the young people to say?

RESEARCHER: Well, it's difficult. I don't feel that I'm wedded to the belief they will say positive things about the service I feel that I'm more wedding to a belief about their troubles being a reflection of wider political systems. I suppose I hope that they might have a sense of that two. I'm trying to be aware of my own feelings about the team and the work they do and see if I can put that aside and see the young people and their experiences. I haven't worked there for nearly three years so although it feel familiar much is also new and different.

QUESTION: Why would you want them to think that?

RESEARCHER: Umm I don't know, because I suppose that's because I feel wider contextual factors are important influences on why you might get a situation where is diagnosed with conduct disorder or start being anti-social and yet we are often led to believe that these things come from something within children. Often in my experience they are some of the poorest families, they have least opportunities they are ummm bound in systems that are limiting. But it might well be that the young people don't conceptualise the problem in that way it will be interesting to see when I do the analysis.

QUESTION: Have the young people spoken about contextual issues so far?

RESEARCHER: No not so far. In fact I'm struggling with the interviews to some extent because I just hadn't really thought about the fact they might not talk very much and what would I do if that was the case. They are not adults and they don't speak in long convoluted ways. I've had to be much more there in the interviews that I imagine you

have had to be the adults you have interviewed. It's been hard because I have knowledge of the team and so when the young people have been finding it hard to speak I have wanted to help out with the knowledge I have about the service. For example one of the young people answered I don't know to every single answer and I was a bit stumped as to what to do.

Peer Comment: But that in and of itself is really important data. That there is a young person who has received this very intensive intervention and really needs help to think about it, she can't find her mind she can't express herself she really needs you to help her do it.

QUESTION: You have spoken about what ideas you have, do you think you had those ideas before starting your training at UEL, do you think you would have had the language to think about their relationship to society.

RESEARCHER: I don't know, that position has its obviously got more refined in me over the last three years being at UEL but that was also how part of how I made sense of the work before. I suppose I see my role now, as a researcher as one of privilege in that I am able to make more theoretical links and make use of the education I've received so I just hope I'm able to do that in an interesting ways that stays close to their stories but also that produces something helpful for the team.

QUESTION: How do you think your relationship to the service has impacted on the interviews you have done so far?

RESEARCHER: Well there are a few things that are important. One is that I was quite worried that in asking young people about a particular service it might start looking like a service audit and in my research proposal they were very keen that I ensured that the work moved up into research. So in the interviews I am in some ways not asking or focusing too much on the fine detail of what was good was wasn't so good questions. Which I suppose means that I have been and will be attempting to get the young people to exploring ideas and experiences rather than giving me feedback on the service delivery, which is much more IPA. This has in some ways made me feel as though I'm being more neutral in that I'm trying to be led by them to go down whatever avenue they think is relevant.

Question: Have they spoken about what they didn't like and how has that been to hear?

RESEARCHER: A few of them have said that some bits weren't good, like they named some workers they didn't like to begin with and that hasn't been difficult to hear because that is the reality of the work. A few of them described not wanting the service initially and then slowly by slowly they started finding it helpful. But yeah I suppose maybe there could be a trap whereby I don't dig as much into what they don't like because of my relationship with the service but also because of my fear about it not being evaluation and being research. I suppose the ones who have agreed to meet me, have all probably had a reasonable positive experience because they have agreed to meet me. There have been several who haven't responded and maybe those are the ones who haven't had a

very good experience and don't want to have contact with the team. So I need to think about the fact I have a particular group. Also I must remember that they have been working with the team for 6 months and so you could also say that they are quite worked up to all intense and purpose. Originally I wanted to interview them at the beginning of the intervention and then after 6 months but then I realised that was not achievable. But I thought that might give a better indication of some of the tension about engagement and consent but unfortunately that wasn't possible.

Question: What were you like as an adolescent?

RESEARCHER: *I don't know*

Peer Comment: That's what the young people said. [Lots of laughter]

RESEARCHER: *I was a very boring adolescent. It's funny I really love working with adolescents but I didn't have a turbulent adolescent at all. I think something about working in that particular team made me feel like I was good. Like the things they celebrated I was good at, like getting on with stuff, being a bit creative, going the extra mile and thinking a bit differently, all that made me feel that I was going to be good at being a psychologist and in fact those were the things that made me good at engaging these young people and the feeling of satisfaction when you felt that you had started being helpful was really powerful.*

Question: What impact has you being you had on the interviews, how do they see you?

RESEARCHER: *Umm, I think they just seen me as a member of staff which is obviously problematic in itself. I think that might have an impact on what they feel able to say? Im going to have to think about the different places in which the interview were carried out and if that has an impact on what they talk about.*

Question: Do you think there is a worry about how the information will be used?

RESEARCHER: *Yes I'm sure and I'm going to have to reflect on the fact that actually maybe sitting in a room asking adolescents to reflect on their experiences maybe isn't the best way to access experience and that there are just so many influences taking place that do we really get something close to what they experienced.*

Appendix B: Research Registration Documentation



[Address]
[Address]
[Address]

18 May 2012

Student Number: [Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]

Registration as a Candidate for the University's Research Degree

I am pleased to inform you that the Research Degrees Subcommittee on behalf of the University Quality and Standards Committee, has registered you for the degree of Professional Doctorate.

Title of Professional Doctorate: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Director of Studies: [Redacted]

Supervisor/s: [Redacted]

Expected completion: According to your actual date of registration, which is **1 September 2010** the registration period is as follows:

Minimum 18 months maximum 48 months (4 years), according to a full time mode of study.

Your thesis is therefore due to be submitted between:

1 March 2012 – 1 September 2014
--

I wish you all the best with your intended research degree programme. Please contact me if you have any further queries regarding to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James J Walsh'.

Dr James J Walsh
School Research Degrees Leader
Direct line: 020 8223 4471
Email: j.j.walsh@uel.ac.uk

Cc: [Redacted]

Appendix C: UEL Ethics Approval Documentation

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.

UEL
University of
East London
www.uel.ac.uk

School of Psychology Professional Doctorate Programmes

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Mark Finn

Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, Stratford, London E15 4LZ
tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966 fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937
e-mail: mno.davies@uel.ac.uk web: www.uel.ac.uk/psychology



The University of East London has campuses at London Docklands and Stratford
If you have any special access or communication requirements for your visit, please let us know. MINICOM 020 8223 2853



Children's Services Research Application Form

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Title of Project/Study:	An Exploration of Adolescents' Experience of Intensive Family Interventions
Name of Applicant:	
Date of application:	12/05/2012

FOR OFFICE USE:

Application reference number:	2012/2		
Officer dealing:			
Application granted?	Yes	Date of decision:	18.5.2012

Decision feedback summary:

You might want to consider simplifying the informed consent letter and information. It is rather long and a bit technical which may put off some people (e.g, I don't think you need say what your methodological tool is). However, will leave for you to consider what is best. I am also recording for our record that [REDACTED] will be acting as our internal contact for this project. It looks really interesting and we look forward to seeing the results!

Appendix E: Consultation From Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC)

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your query. The Social Care REC reviews:

1. Social care studies funded by Department of Health.
 - Research commissioned directly through the Policy Research Programme.
 - Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) studies (i.e. those to be designed by HSCIC for implementation by Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities, who do not then individually need to seek additional review).
 - Studies commissioned by or through National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Social Care Research.
 - Social care studies funded (in rare cases) through NIHR.
2. Social care research that involves people lacking capacity in England and Wales and requires approval under the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The Social Care REC is recognised by the Secretary of State as an Appropriate Body for this purpose.
3. Social care research involving sites in England and another United Kingdom country.
4. 'Own account' research undertaken by Councils with social services responsibilities, where the Chief Investigator and/or sponsor feels there are substantial ethical issues.
5. Studies of integrated services (health and social care), provided that there is no clinical intervention involved.
6. Studies taking place in NHS settings with NHS patients where the approach uses social science or qualitative methods, provided that the research does not involve any change in treatment or clinical practice.
7. Intergenerational studies in social care, where both adults and children, or families, are research participants.
8. Other social care studies not suitable for review by other NRES RECs, subject to the capacity of the Social Care REC. This could include service user-led research.
9. Adult social care research involving changes in, or the withdrawal of, standard care.

Social care research does not require review by the Social Care REC if it is reviewed by another committee operating in accordance with the ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics, unless sections 1 or 9 above apply or the research involves NHS patients or service users as research participants. A review is required if there is a legal requirement for REC review e.g. under the Mental Capacity Act. Student research within the field of social care should ordinarily be reviewed by a University REC (UREC). If a UREC review is not available to a student, they can contact the Co-ordinator for advice.

As this project is student research and outside the NHS, review by your University REC should be sufficient, provided there are no legal requirements for a REC review e.g. under the Mental Capacity Act.

For information I am attaching two documents – Governance Arrangements for RECs (GAfREC) and an algorithm describing when projects should be reviewed by a REC, apart from the University one.

Please let me know if you require any further assistance.
Best wishes

[REDACTED]

Social Care Research Ethics Committee Co-ordinator | Social Care Institute for Excellence | T: 020 7024 7650 | F: 020 7024 7651 | Direct Line: 020 7024 7660 | W: www.scie.org.uk | Fifth Floor, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5BH

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet

Information for parents and young people



Researcher's name: [REDACTED]

Contact information: Email:

[REDACTED]

Address:

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology

Stratford Campus

Water Lane

London E15 4LZ



Dear parent and young person

This letter is to provide you with all the information you need to consider when you decide whether or not to participate in the research study. I am completing this study as part of my Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of East London.

What is the study all about and what is its goal?

- The title of the project is likely to be 'Exploring adolescents' experience of intensive family interventions'
- This research hopes to understand what sense young people make about working with teams like [Name of service]. It also aims to explore how young people understand the changes that can take place in their family. It will look at how young people feel they are viewed by helping agencies and also how young people see agencies in return.
- This research project will be conducted in collaboration with the [REDACTED]. 10-12 young people will be recruited who have been working with the team for at least 6 months. You will be asked to sign a consent form before participating in interviews. Interviews will be up to 1 hour in length.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed and made anonymous by the researcher.

What does taking part in the study involve?

- I will probably be introduced to you by a member of the team and we will meet on one occasion in a place of your choice.
- Our talk will last about an hour and I'll be interested in hearing how you feel about different things in your life, the involvement of [REDACTED] in your life and what things may or may not have changed.

Where will the talks take place?

- The location of our talks will depend on where you want to meet and where you feel most comfortable but also and where it is safe to meet for both of us.
- It might be that we meet in your home, where [REDACTED] is based or in a café. This will be your choice.

If I don't feel ok after the talks what will happen?

➤ There is a small chance that what you decide to talk about may be upsetting. Remember it is always your choice what you decide to talk about. If you were to become distressed during our talks we could think and talk about other things, or take a break or stop altogether. If you wanted me to I could talk to the [REDACTED] worker who you feel closest to and they may be able to help. If you wanted me to I could check in with you afterwards and see if you were ok. I could also tell you about some places in the borough who offer extra support to young people.

Will the things I say be kept private?

- What you say in our talk will be kept confidential. I will record our talks and then type them up later. But instead of using your name I will give you a fake name so I will be the only person who knows who you are or what you have said.
- I will type up exactly what you say and make sure take out names, places or information that could give your identity away. I will store all of the typed up notes on a computer that has a password. After my study is finished I will keep the typed up notes with your number on them and I will destroy the voice recordings.
- If you were to talk about something serious that meant that you or someone else was not safe I would have to talk to the [REDACTED] team, I will try to tell you if I have to do this. I will remind you of this at the beginning of our talks.

Do I have to take part?

- Taking part in this study is completely your choice. If you do not want to take part you can say no.
- If you decide to take part and then you later decide you don't want to carry on taking part you can withdraw your consent at any time and you don't have to explain why.

Will I get anything in return?

- You will get a £10 voucher for a shop of your choice in exchange your time. If it helps with your CV I can also give you a certificate to say that you have helped in some academic research.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form before you take part. Please keep this information sheet.
Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Trainee Clinical Psychologist

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor [...] School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

Or [...], School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email:

Appendix G: Parent and Participant Consent Form

*Consent to participate in the study
'Adolescents' experience of intensive family
interventions'*

Researcher's name: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]



If Yes, please tick the following:

- I have read the information sheet or someone has read it to me
- I understand what will be involved in taking part in the study
- I understand that I do not have to take part in his study if I do not want to
- I understand I can leave from a session at any time without giving a reason
- I understand that what I say will be confidential unless me or someone else's safety is at risk
- I understand what will happen to the data after the study
- I understand that even if I do not wish to continue the confidential data may still be used
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions
- I know how to contact the researcher should I have any queries in the future

Please tick a box:

Yes, I would like to participate in this study

No, I do not want to participate in this study

Yes

No

My name

My signature..... **Date**.....

Parent's name.....

Parent's signature **Date:**

Researcher's name

Researcher's signature.....**Date:**

Appendix H: Interview Schedule

Warm up Questions

What would you normally be doing if you were meeting me?

What do sort things do you do in your spare time?

Experience of receiving the intervention

- **If you think back to when [REDACTED] first started working with you, what do you think was going on for you at that time?**
- What has been your experience of receiving this intervention?
- What do you feel they were trying to achieve? What did that feel like?
- How would you describe to other people what had been going on for you?
- How other people have described what was going on for you?

Experience/relationship to help

- **What experiences have you had with professionals in the past?**
- What have your families experience of professionals been?
- How do you and family talk about professionals?
- How do you think you are viewed by professionals?
- What beliefs do you have about professionals and what they do?

Experience of change

- **Did you experience any change in you or your family over the time that [REDACTED] was involved?**
- **How did you make sense of the change/no change?**
- Who is in your family? Who is close to whom in your family?
- How would you describe yourself in your family?
- How would other people in your family describe you?
- How are problems sorted out in your family?
- What would other people say about your family?
- What advice would you offer to other young people who are about to start working with [REDACTED]

Prompts

- Could you tell me more about that?
- What do you mean?
- How does that make you feel at that moment?
- What do you think about that?
- Can't you give me an example of what you are talking about?

Debriefing

- How do you feel about the conversation we have just had?
- Is there anything that bothered you about the interview?
- Is there anything you would like me not to type up?
- Do you have any questions?
- Explain what happens now and give debrief sheet?

Appendix I: First Stage of IPA Analysis

Section of Jade's Transcript and Analytic Annotations

Jade- interview conducted in social care premises

Initial conceptual themes

THE PROBLEM SEEN AS
RELATIONAL

FIGHTING AND ARGUING

PRACTICAL HELP

TALKING BEING HELPFUL

1 R: Umm brilliant so we have done all the paperwork
2 and its Jade, is it that alright to call you Jade.
3 Brilliant. So where I have started with other young
4 people was just trying to imagine yourself back sort
5 whenever it all started and think about what was
6 going on for you really at that time
7 P: What was going on for me was me and my
8 parents, me and my parents just argued and we
9 were fighting a lot and it was getting to the point
10 where I almost went into care.
11 R: Right
12 P: And [name] they sat down and they made all
13 different rules and there was a big book like that
14 [indicates book size] they had a big massive book
15 then on the walls we had what we was going to do
16 to like, if there was a situation and then what starts
17 a situation. So it was all in a bubble and it was like
18 what to do if like my brothers annoying me, if my
19 mums annoying me and my dad and we had all that
20 and it actually did help because we had like all
21 these rules like [.] wasn't allowed on play station
22 that long, we all had to do our jobs and it actually did
23 help cause we was able to talk to them and tell
24 them exactly what was going on so yeah and it
25 really did help
26 R: Ok so there loads in that, let's just go back so I
27 know how it had got what had kind of, the arguing
28 and fighting...
29 P: Me and my mum were fighting, like punching
30 ups, I tried to push her down the stairs. Me and my
31 mum used to really be at each other's throats. My

Descriptive and linguistic analysis

Lots of fighting and arguing to such an extent that she felt she was going to go into care

Sat me down
Rules

Had things to do that helped something on the wall that she was able to look at and remind herself what to do if people were annoying her. They all had rules. Seems to feel it helped because they were able to talk to them and tell them exactly how it was

Intense fighting between her and her mum, violent incidents where she pushed her mum down the stairs. Talks about her Dad also getting it as if she becomes something other than herself when in a rage

At each other's throats give very strong indication of what things were like

1

Initial conceptual themes

THREAT OF CARE
PRESENT

NEEDING TO SEPARATE
FROM FAMILY

REDUCTION IN CONFLICT

POWER – STRUGGLE FOR
POWER BEING SEEN IN
EXAMPLE OF WORD 'NO'

32 Dad used to get it as well but it was mostly me and
33 my mum. That would start everything. So yeah it
34 just gets to that point where I almost did get taken
35 into care
36 R: Was that her saying I can't cope or you saying?
37 P: Yeah and the social worker
38 R: Right
39 P: Yeah since [NAME] it's been good and [NAME]
40 got into a hostel now so everything is better me and
41 my mum haven't argued but when I did live there
42 the [NAME] thing was really helping
43 R: OK and have you got any sense of how, I mean
44 had it been going on for many years
45 P: Many years. Me and mum always just used to
46 argue it was like
47 R: Give me an example of something you might
48 fight about.
49 P: the word No. Yeah the word No. I was a spite
50 brat [laughs]. If she ever said the word no, like if
51 asked for hair extension she would just go to me
52 NO, that was it, that would be it. And it would be
53 about food, everything
54 R: You'd say you want that and she'd say no and
55 you would.
56 P: Yeah it was quite an embarrassing time for me
57 [nervous laughs]
58 R: Right now looking back it feels a bit
59 embarrassing
60 P: Yeah it does
61 P: What because you don't feel you're in that place
62 anymore?

Descriptive and linguistic analysis

Their arguing would start everything off in the home

Describing nearly going into care due to arguments

No living in a hostel and seems to feel things are better, less arguing now that she has left home.

The word no being source of arguments – what does no mean – could be limits, struggle for power

That would be it- refers to Jade kicking off

Sense of looking back- feeling shame- nervous laughter

seems to show some shame but also quite sad

2

Initial conceptual themes

LOOKING BACK

BELIEFS ABOUT SELF

MIXED RELATIONSHIP WITH BROTHER

NOT EXPERIENCED AS THE FAVOURITE LEADING TO RIVALRY AND JEALOUSY

HOLDING QUITE EXCLUDED POSITION IN THE FAMILY

FAIRNESS- EACH GETTING TO SAY THEIR VIEW

TALKING BEING REPARATIVE

GET IT OFF OUR CHESTS

MEDIATED TALK PREVENTING ARGUMENTS

63 P: No I'm not in that place anymore. I'm more
64 independent I don't depend on mummy anymore
65 R: And were there other dynamics, it's you your
66 mum and Dad
67 P: Yeah and my step, half brother
68 R: So how did things kind of work in the family.
69 What was the dynamic?
70 P: It was more, I used to see that they favoured
71 my brother. But they don't but I used to see it that
72 way. Because he is quite spoilt, but it was just that
73 used to see that he was being favoured all the
74 time and that used to cause arguments cause I
75 used to say 'its favouritism'. Me and my brother he
76 is a little shit I must admit
77 R: He's quite difficult?
78 P: Yeah he's difficult he's horrible to me because
79 I'm his big sister. We still play fights with me. He
80 used to attack me my mum used to laugh. That's
81 what used to really annoy me, but she used to go to
82 me it's your fault you hit him first Yeah it's one of
83 them ones, its brother sister rivalry. Yep. But
84 [name] really did help with that because they sat
85 him down and asked him his views on me and
86 asked my views on him and it was all round the
87 table, we all sat there and spoke and then we was
88 all able to say what we needed to say and get it off
89 our chest in front of someone, so there was no
90 arguments. Cause if I said anything before it would
91 probably end up in an argument but because
92 [NAME] was there they were able to write it down
93 and everything and then put up rules.

Descriptive and linguistic analysis

Describes being in better place

Her sense is that the fighting was connected to her brother being favourite.
Rivalry/jealousy
She talks about this and then adds that she thinks he a little shit. Very confused and conflicted-

The way he is to her because she is his big sister.
Describes him 'attacking' her and mum laughing. 'Attack' feel like strong word her.
Fairness - each having a say.
All round the table everyone getting chance to speak

Mentions talking all-round the table
Something significant in sitting around together
Get stuff off our chests and because it was with someone else this prevented arguments

Someone other to the family making talking easier

3

Initial conceptual themes

PUSHED OUT OF THE FAMILY THE ODD ONE OUT SOMETHING MORE LIKE REJECTION THAN SEPARATION

FAMILY ABLE TO HEAR HER

JOINING AGAIN WITH FAMILY

RELATIONAL EXPLANATION FOR THE PROBLEM

USE OF STRATEGIES IN GETTING HER OWN WAY POWERFUL

94 R: And you felt you were able to be honest?
95 P: Yep
96 R: Can't you remember some of the things you said
97 at the beginning.
98 P: Just about how I feel like I'm pushed out of the
99 family, like I feel like the odd one out and then they
100 was able to help with that and I was able to do stuff
101 with my mum my dad and my brother
102 R: That feeling of being pushed out
103 P: That really did cause a lot
104 R: do you think that had a connection with why you
105 were so anti the word No?
106 P: I think so yeah. Cause I never used to do
107 anything with my mum dad or brother but then after
108 that we started doing things together, so it was
109 actually really good. Because they were actually
110 able to hear it from my point of view without going
111 off on one.
112 R: Right. And what kinds of things do you
113 remember you're mum saying about her opinion
114 about it all?
115 P: Me just starting over the word No and for stupid
116 reasons. And like if I don't want to go somewhere
117 if I'm supposed to go somewhere and I don't want
118 to do it I used to cause a row so I didn't do it and
119 that was mostly her problem with me.
120 R: So you had strategies you were using but they
121 just weren't always
122 P: working. And they weren't always a good
123 strategy either.

Descriptive and linguistic analysis

Feels like she's pushed out of the family-

Pushed out leaves me with the feeling of someone of something pushing her?
The odd one out in her family
What relationship this has to her being from a previous relationship.
Seems to feel that service helped with this and was able to get them to do stuff together as a family

Practical steps, encouraging more activities together

Able to hear her feelings about being the odd one out pushed out

Whether mum found difficult. Using arguments to not do things she didn't want to do.

Initial conceptual themes		Descriptive and linguistic analysis
SWITCHES BETWEEN HER BEING THE PROBLEM OR HER BROTHER OR HER MUM.	124 R: Yeah, so sort of feeling a bit left out and like a bit 125 pushed out of the family and were there any other 126 sort of underlying things like that that you felt were 127 going on. 128 P: There was so much going on. 129 R: any other examples you feel a bit to say? 130 P: umm I can't even remember. 131 R: You were kind of saying that that was one of the 132 things. 133 P: yeah. That was basically the main thing, that's 134 what caused everything. 135 R: Can you remember what you're brother said in 136 the meeting. 137 P: Just that I'm an arshole [LAUGHS] and start for 138 no reason. This is coming from an 11 year old 139 [laughs]. My brother really doesn't like it when I 140 start he gets scared and starts crying and he's quite 141 ...fragile. 142 R: Right, can you see that now. 143 P: Yeah I can really see it now. 144 R: Could you see it before? 145 P: It's like he doesn't really want me to come round 146 the house, because just in case I start. I can see 147 he's really jumpy. 148 R: Right and how does that feel? 149 P: It makes me feel like shit it does [nervous laugh]. 150 But he's going PGL in March so hopefully he will 151 come back a boy. 152 [laughs]. 153 R: Do you mean he will have grown up a bit	Says that there was so much going on with get emphasis but when I ask what she says she can't remember now Starts off laughing about what he's called her but then she softens as she says how he gets scared of her and that he cries and then she pauses and says that he fragile. I was left wondering about her own fragility in the family linked with the feeling of being pushed out. Has the power to scare her brother

5

Initial conceptual themes		Descriptive and linguistic analysis
NOW MOVES INTO INTERNALISED PROBLEM NARRATIVE FEELS LIKE A SCARY MONSTER POWER	154 P: Yeah hopefully cause he a bit like a fairy. Yeah 155 we think he's a fairy. 156 R: So him being scared of you did that add to the 157 feeling of being left out? 158 P: yeah. 159 R: How did that make you feel about yourself? 160 P: It made me feel like I'm some scary monster, to 161 scare my own brother like I do. But he's actually ok 162 now. We can play together. I made him a house out 163 of a cardboard box over Christmas with windows 164 for him and a door. 165 R: Do you feel that time is behind you now? 166 P: Yeah it is. 167 P: Me and my mum haven't had an argument in a 168 while. We had a little blip because my DVD player 169 broke and I asked her to come round and sort it out 170 and she went to me I'm not coming round now. And 171 I was like, but I need you, I need entertainment, it's 172 boring in this one room. We had a blip over that but 173 since that we haven't had an argument since 174 September. 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184	Describes brother as 'fairy' as if to emphasis his weakness in comparison to how she can feel at times. Quickly moves onto talk about herself as monster- the juxtaposition of fairy and monster reflects a sense of how she feels in her family. Having the power to scare her brother made her feel like a scary monster Keen to show how she has been kind to him at Christmas Feels that arguments have reduced had one argument since September whereas before it was every week and were described as massive Tells this story about feeling that she needed her mum and getting upset when she wouldn't come to help her. It's about a dvd. Sense of still needing her mum even though she has gained this independence

6

Appendix J: Second Phase of Analysis

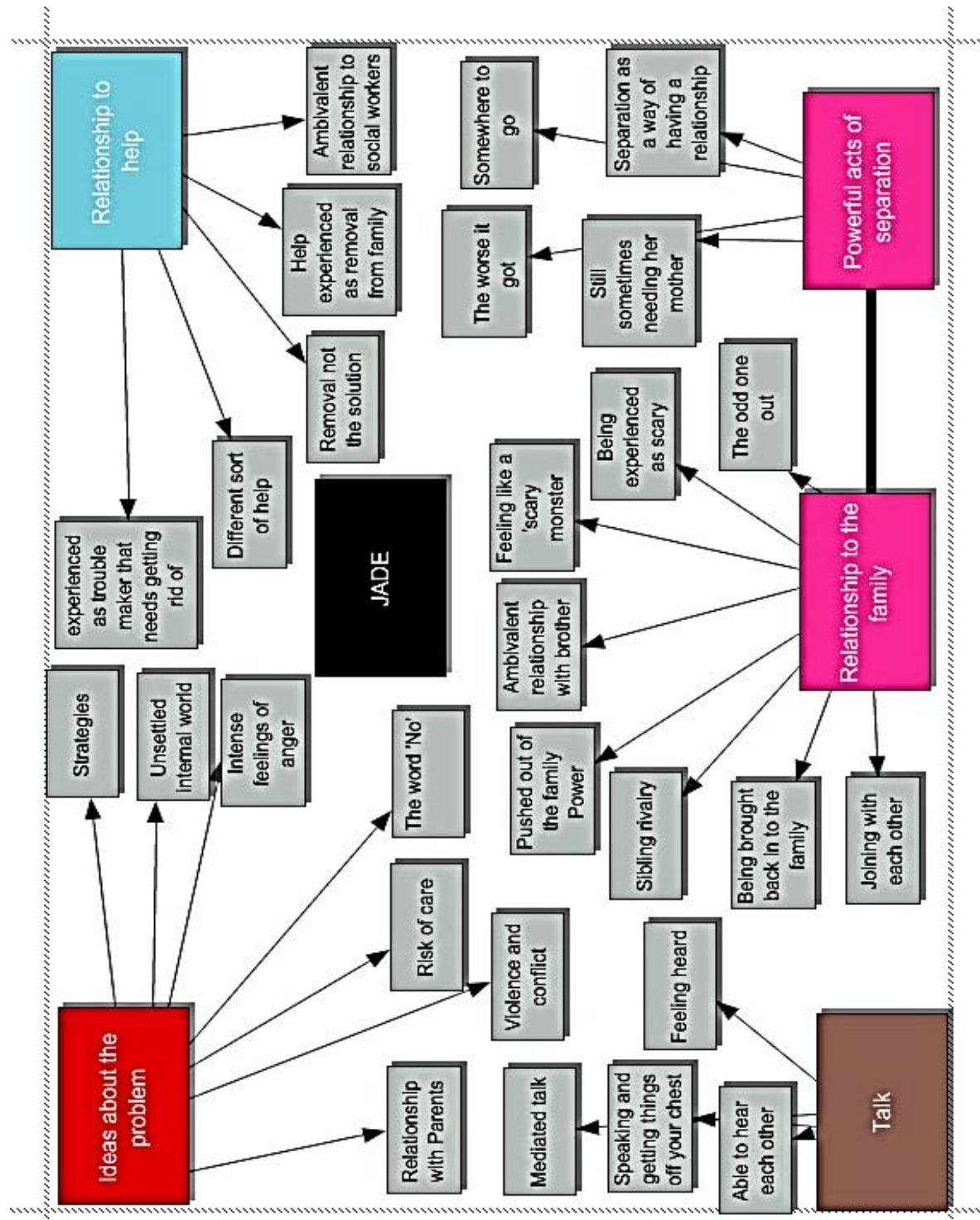
Emergent theme summary table and the organization of Jade's significant quotes

Jade			
Cluster label	Theme	Page - Line	Quote/ Keyword
Ideas about the problem	Relationship with Parents	P1-L8	Me and my parents just argued and we were fighting a lot and it was getting to the point where I almost went into care
	Violence and conflict	P1-L29	Me and my mum were fighting, like punching ups, I tried to push her down the stairs. Me and my mum used to really be at each other's throats..
	Risk of care	P2-L33	So yeah it just gets to that point where I almost did get taken into care.
	Strategies	P4-L116	Like if I don't want to go somewhere, if I'm supposed to go somewhere and I don't want to do it I used to cause a row so I didn't do it
	Feelings of anger	P8-L221	I can't stop it I can't control it.
	The word 'No'	P2-L49	The word No.[...]. If she ever said the word no, like if I asked for hair extension she would just go to me NO, that was it, that would be it
Relationship with the family	Joining with each other	P11-L326	I was able to do stuff with her, I was able to do her hair and her eyebrows and that
	Returning to the family	P11-L335	He is still jumpy but he's not as bad as he used to be and he can actually do things with me now
	Ambivalent relationship with brother	P3-L70	I used to see that they favoured my brother. But they don't but I used to see it that way. Because he is quite spoilt, but it was just that I used to see that he was being favoured all the time and that used to cause arguments cause I used to say 'its favouritism'.
	Sibling Rivalry	P3-L79	He used to attack me my mum used to laugh. That's what used to really annoy me, but she used to go to me it's your fault you hit him first.
	Pushed out of the family	P4-L98	I feel like I'm pushed out of the family
	Power	P16-L480	Before it used to make me feel good. It used to make me feel big. But now it just makes me feel awful because he is only little, he shouldn't be growing up with that because he is now turning into me.
	Feeling like a 'scary monster'.	P15-L478	It used to make me feel like I was just some big scary monster that just looked like it was going to crush him.
		P6-158	It made me feel like I'm some scary monster
	Being experienced as scary	P5-L138	My brother really doesn't like it when I start he gets scared and starts crying and he's quite ...fragile.
	The odd one out	P4-L99	I feel like the odd one out and then they was able to help with that and I was able to do stuff with my mum my dad and my brother.
Benefits of talking		P10-L294	we started being able to speak and actually just let it all out after that then I was ok
	Speaking and getting things off your chest	P3-L84	Because they sat him down and asked him his views on me and asked my views on him and it was all round the table, we all sat there and spoke and then we was all able to say what we needed to say and get it off our chest in front of someone, so there was no arguments
	Mediated talk	P3-L90	Cause if I said anything before it would probably end up in an argument but because [name of team]was there they were able to write it down and everything and then put up rules.

	Able to hear each other	P4-L109	Because they were actually able to hear it from my point of view without going off on one.
	Feeling heard	P10-L300	before I couldn't say anything because I wasn't heard, I was just shouted over, yeah
Powerful acts of separation	Still sometimes needing her mother	P6-L169	I was like, but I need you, I need entertainment, it's boring in this one room.
	The worse it got	P6-L181	It got to the point where I went through a really bad time and I tried to kill myself
	Separation as a way of having a relationship	P7-L194	Yep, cause I know so many people that once they have moved out they are so much, they get along so well with their parents.
	Somewhere to go	P15-L443	I've got somewhere to go. I have somewhere to go. Don't have to go sit in the cold. Thinking fucking bitch. I've got somewhere to go.
			I've had loads of reports from that woman, from my maths teacher so it's obviously gone on my file and they have gone oh she's trouble blab bla lets just get rid of her
Beliefs about Help	College staff experiences	P8-L242	
	Ambivalent relationship to social workers	P12-L348	I didn't like them, still not over keen on them. They are too pushy with what they want to do
	Help experienced as removal from family	P12-L367	No they just tried to get me away from them. That all it is. That is all it is with social workers. That's why I prefer [name of team] because it wasn't like that. They were actually helping, social workers just want to remove you not help. Just [indicates brushing aside] sorted. No its not.
	Removal not the solution	P13-L388	they are not helping just removing you from the situations and thinking it all going to be better, No its not.
		P14-L419	It's because they are able to listen. They are able to listen and feedback their views.
	Different sort of help	P14-L427	[Name of service] helped because they were able to sit there and speak and listen. Social workers don't listen they don't speak, they just go ok you're going into care.

Appendix K: Third Phase of Analysis

Jade's computer assisted mind map of themes



Appendix L: Extract from Reflexive Diary – thoughts after Jade’s Interview

Jade was 20 minutes late for the interview today. We had arranged to meet at [name of social services building] where they had booked a room for Jade and I to meet. I waited in the reception and after 15 minutes I thought that wasn’t coming. Just when I was considering calling the team, she arrived.

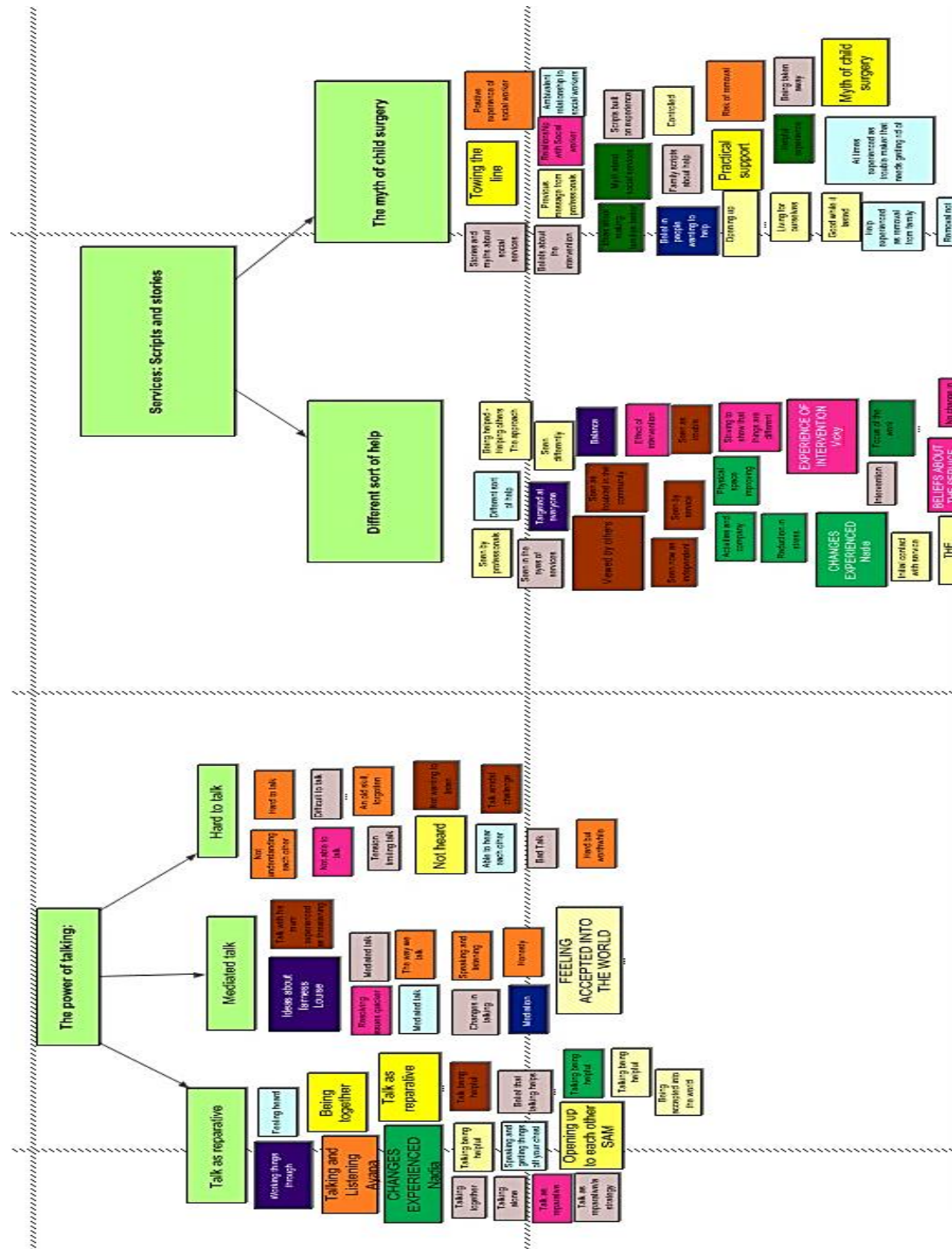
Jade had a bright, open face, and seemed a little shy initially. Jade spoke in an extremely animated way, and when she began to tell stories the whole room filled up with energy. She used large hand movements and did impressions of her mum and herself. She was instantly very engaging.

As the interview went on I was struck with a sadness that she seemed to hold. There appeared to be a lot of bravado in the way she spoke about some aspects of her experience but also just beneath the service I felt a fragility. When she spoke about how bad things had got and how she had attempted to end her life, I felt myself move into ‘clinical psychology’ mode and felt the need to check out if this was still the case and if she had felt that bad since. She reassured me that she no longer felt that way.

Later on Jade when she described the dispute with her college about her courses she described her tutor as not bothering with her. I felt that she may often feel a sense of others not bothering with her. Jade said at the end not to tell her social worker about the problem she had at college and I was struck with how connected in her mind I was to her network of professionals. I reassured her by saying that I wouldn’t be communicating with her social worker about this and that I would only do that if I was worried about her safety and she seemed reassured. Thinking about it now, we both reassured each other at different points in the interview.

She seemed very keen to tell me how helpful the team had been and I felt unsure if this was because in her mind I was part of the team or if she genuinely wanted me to know how helpful it had been. It seemed like she was describing her first real experience of help in some ways. I got a real sense of how unbearable it was for her at home but also how important the relationship with her mum seemed. She told me about living independently but also still needing her mum to help with her DVD player and in that moment I felt the adolescent who needed to separate but also that adolescent who still very much needs help.

Section of and early draft of theme abstraction and organization

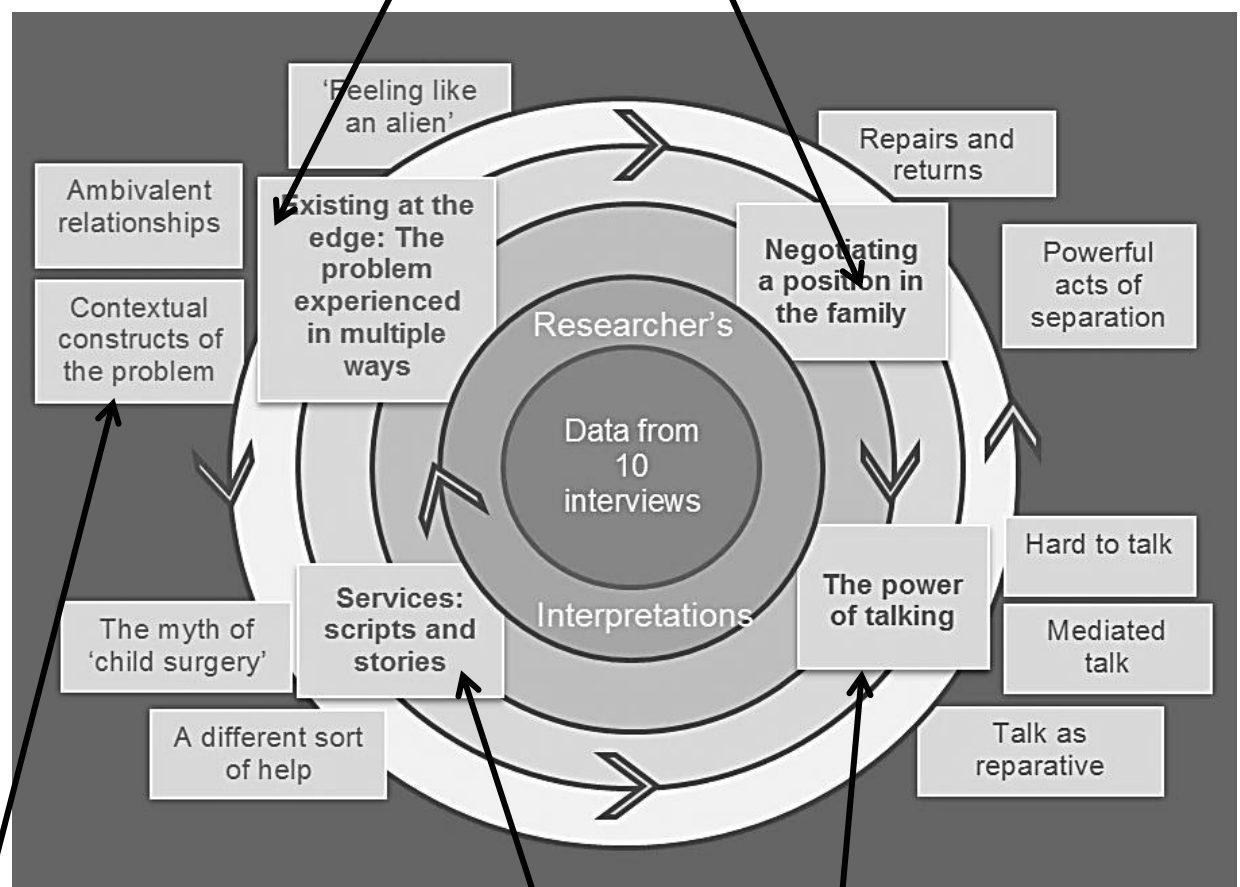


Appendix N: Earlier draft of theme formation and theme titles

Feedback from presentation to London IPA group:

- Existing at the edge might be too oblique as a title and could mean a number of things.
- The word ambivalent may have too many connotations in psychoanalytic thinking

Consider the relationship between the internalised problem explanation and the movement back and forth between that and a relational explanation and how to capture this in the theme arrangement



- Think about the role of context
- Capture the ways in which the young people spoke about wider contextual influences in their lives

- The themes around talking could be collapsed into other bigger themes as they seemed to run throughout

- Think about how to tell the hopeful part of the story within this theme
- Consider more the role of practical support

Appendix O: Distribution of Themes across the Sample

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate themes	Vicky	Sam	Nadia	Madison	Louise	Liam	Joe	Jade	Chloe	Ayana
Me: the experience of myself	Feeling like an Alien		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	The Powerful Self	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	The Angry Self		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Us: The experience of my family	Hard to Talk	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Ruptures in Relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Repairs and Returns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Them: The Experience of professionals	The Myth of 'Child Surgery'		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
	Mediated Talk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Opening up	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
The outside world	Troubled Environments	✓				✓	✓	✓			✓
	The Absence of Context	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	

Appendix P: Me: The Experience of myself supporting data

Superordinate	Subordinate	Name	Page - Line	Quotes
Me: The Experience of Myself	Feeling like an Alien'	Sam	P1-L18	I was struggling, me and my sister was struggling to behave with to my mum.
		Louise	P1-L12	I was really naughty [laughs] like I didn't listen to her, didn't come home on time all stuff like that
		Liam	P1-L22	I was just bad
		Liam	P9-L257	I didn't trust my mum.
		Joe	P17-L508	Like we thought..., I felt like I was an alien, that I couldn't talk to anyone or no one would understand what I was going through or what I felt like.
		Chloe	P7-L206	Annoying. That's all I can think of.
		Chloe	P7-L192	Lazy
		Jade	P6-158	It made me feel like I'm some scary monster
		Jade	P5-L138	My brother really doesn't like it when I start he gets scared and starts crying and he's quite ...fragile.
	The Powerful Self	Jade	P4-L116	Like if I don't want to go somewhere, if I'm supposed to go somewhere and I don't want to do it I used to cause a row so I didn't do it
		Vicky	P12-L368	I want things my own way
		Madison	P3-L80	I just don't like the word no so I just don't speak to her or ask her things.
		Louise	P3-L80	I think that when I want to do something which I want to do there is no way she can stop me.
		Louise	P4-L94	I had no freedom and I was out with them I just took it upon myself to have my own freedom and then that caused arguments with my mum because I wouldn't come home and then she called the police when I didn't come home
	The Angry Self	Nadia	P9-L271	A bit umm had a very bad temper, like if someone kicks me I will like go really mad and get into a lot of trouble at school
		Madison	P6-L 178	First of all we started off with my anger, we had these sheets, and then it was like the things that umm that umm I weren't good at, that was coming in on time, school, getting angry in school and arguing with my mum and not having a good relationship with my mum
		Madison	P8 -L227	I always just got angry. Like that's why me and my mum always argue cause I just got angry and I would argue with her. Like in school I would argue, I just got angry. It's just always been like that.
		Jade	P8-L221	I can't stop it I can't control it.
		Liam	P1-L28	I was annoyed and angry with like everything
		Liam	P1-L31	Angry at life in general. Angry.

Appendix Q: Us: The experience of my family supporting data

Superordinate	Subordinate	Name	Page - Line	Quotes
Us: The Experience of My Family	Hard to Talk	Madison	P2-L57	I don't say nothing to my mum, I don't speak to my mum about things
		Louise	P6-L171	I just didn't want to listen to her no more.
		Ayana	P1-L27	Me being there was hard. To talk to each other at first but then it sort of like as it when on, started to understand each other and how things was.
		Vicky	P3-L70	Because I don't talk to my Dad
	Ruptures in Relationships	Joe	P7-L189	Call her really bad names, shouting, throwing things around the house, breaking things, going out and not coming back for some days or some nights and not telling her where I was going or who I was staying with at that time
		Madison	P5-L151	Because we used to argue, we used to argue a lot.
		Madison	PLY - L339	I care about my brother I've always cared about my brothers, but when that was happening yeah I felt sad on him because he used to think every time I come in the house it would kick off.
		Liam	P5/L139	I moved out anyway cause I didn't like my mum and by the time I did want to move back in, my sister had already moved in to my room. So it was too late to go back so I stayed by myself.
		Liam	P1-L21	I had arguments at home
		Ayana	P4-L102	Screaming, pushing, it gets physical;
		Ayana	P15-L438	At first I was like why am I here seriously there is no point, everyone is lying in this room, just sitting here lying, I was like if she's lying I can't, and we both lying there is no point, nothing is going to change.
		Louise	P1-L10	I kept having like arguments with my mum a lot and falling out with her.
		Louise	P2-L25	I had a massive argument with my mum and at the time I thought it was her fault but it wasn't, I was really really rude to her and she like, she didn't beat me up, I said she did but she didn't, she like hit me and then I called the police on her and they believed my story over her so they put me into care
	Repairs and Returns	Nadia	P4-L121	She umm she was umm like, she didn't panic like and stuff like, cause at out other house there used to be lots of people knocking for us and it used to give her a headache
		Madison	P7-L195	Talking to me about ways of when your angry, like ways to handle it and to deal with it if your angry
		Sam	P8-L237	We just like, I make her something, I talk to her
		Sam	P5-L138	She started like talking to me more, not more but like, she like, started like, when I talked to her she started talking back to me.
		Joe	P10-L285	Before it was really bad the way we was acting with each other, after it was like we got our friendship or our like, our family back together so it felt really good
		Ayana	P5-L135	At first my mum like my mum wouldn't be honest; she would just be like yeah, she wouldn't be honest. And I was like there is not point like, it won't help. But after a while she started just saying how she felt.
		Vicky	P5-L123	Got like solved through everyone talking and through discussion.

Appendix R: Them: The experience of professionals supporting data

Superordinate	Subordinate	Name	Page - Line	Quotes
Them: The Experience of Professionals	The myth of 'child surgery'	Nadia	P6- L159	My friends used to say that social workers take you away from children, I mean your parents
		Madison	P19- L564	Like when my mum was like take her away, they were like she don't need to be taken away, her house is clean, she gets provided for, she gets food, so she don't need to be taken away.
		Ayana	P14- L315	That's what everyone thinks social workers take you away, but they don't really, they don't really think.
		Ayana	P14- L401	she helped me a lot. She would come and check up a lot. Be nice.
	Mediated talk	Madison	P16- L464	Most of the time when they go away its more calmed down because everything has been let out. But if it was just me and my mum, it would be let out in the wrong way.
		Liam	P9- L271	She was more like a friend as well. She would just listen, listen she would actually talk to me and stuff like when I got suspended she would ask why and this and that.
		Nadia	P10- L273	That they are helpful and that you should give them a chance, to like, they will help you a lot in your life
		Joe	P15- L453	Now we got help we can help other people in the way that we got helped.
	Opening up: a different sort of help	Liam	P10- L280	That we used to go to the office after school. I liked everyone in the office, I liked the other young people I met, I would like do it again. I just liked it. I still see some of the other young people.
		Vicky	P7- L208	I don't really know any of them properly
		Sam	P5- L127	Like, just saying do you want to have things or do you want to have that, do you want to go cinema and have fun in the house
		Sam	P4- 109	I'd just ignore my sister and mum, mum in a good way, and if my sister was rude to me just ignore her and tell my mum.
		Vicky	P5- L139	They have tried to get us to meet like step by step but he wouldn't like make improvements at first.
		Nadia	P10- L278	They take you out places, and talk to you and like they have one on one conversation, a one on one conversation and that.
		Nadia	P7- L208	If it's going to make your family better you should like give them a chance and that.
		Madison	P1 - L16	Something about families. Help. They come in and help families. That they were going to be working with my mum, and then they'll work with me and then once, I think once a couple of weeks it was me and mum together that had a meeting.
		Louise	P2- L46	I just thought someone would come to the house once an week, kind of like therapy. [...] Because I haven't had therapy I don't really know what it is but I think it was more just like there as a mediator and we just spoke about like problems and stuff
		Vicky	P4- L99	The have got me off the streets about more, me and my mum have a better relationship and with Dad it sort of a bit on and off

Appendix S: Them: The Outside World supporting data

Superordinate	Subordinate	Name	Page - Line	Quotes
The outside world	Troubled environments	Joe	P15-L447	A messed up family that needs loads of help and attention. But then everyone has got things going wrong with them or situations that need help with
		Joe	P3-L72	They were like my family [...] who knew what I was going through at that time
		Joe	P19-L556	Things you need, I've lost. But when you go the right way, the right way people are good things you gain more things than you could even possible think when you are going the wrong way
		Liam	P8-L240	My neighbours, they knew that the workers where for me like that I was bad, that I need a social worker or something
	The Absence of the Wider Context	Madison	P5-L138	Parents don't care like, they are like single mums they don't work and stuff like that, and their mums just don't care
		Louise	P17-L516	People would have looked at us like annoying teenagers who like I don't what, But I see it sometimes like girls on the bus and stuff who are really loud and shouting and stuff used to be like that it so embarrassing but um.
		Joe	P7-L208	So [name of service] really helped us at a point, as in as soon as they finished working with us it went straight back down
		Chloe	P2-L51	I don't know, I don't know to be honest.
		Chloe	P9-L258	I don't know. I don't even know what they are.